

Menopause at Work



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Why do we need to talk about menopause?

- Women make up nearly 50% of the UK workforce.
- Women aged 50 – 64 are the fastest growing economically active group in the UK.
- 75 – 80% of women of a menopausal age are in work.

What's Happening to You?

Menopause is when a woman stops having periods and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. It is generally defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause in the UK is 51 but it can be earlier or later than this, either naturally or due to surgery or illness.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience physical and / or psychological symptoms. This can start five years before menopause.

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months. Symptoms should start to fade but typically last for a further 4 years.

Menopause Symptoms

Every woman is different. Not every woman will experience every symptom and some may not notice any at all. However, three out of four will, and one in four could experience severe symptoms.



Symptoms can include hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, headaches or worsening migraines, poor concentration, fatigue, depression, anxiety, palpitations, panic attacks, mood changes, skin changes, urinary infections, and joint pain.

Managing Symptoms

There are a number of ways to manage symptoms from the medical approach to natural approaches including dietary and lifestyle changes.

HRT

Government recommended NICE guidelines state:

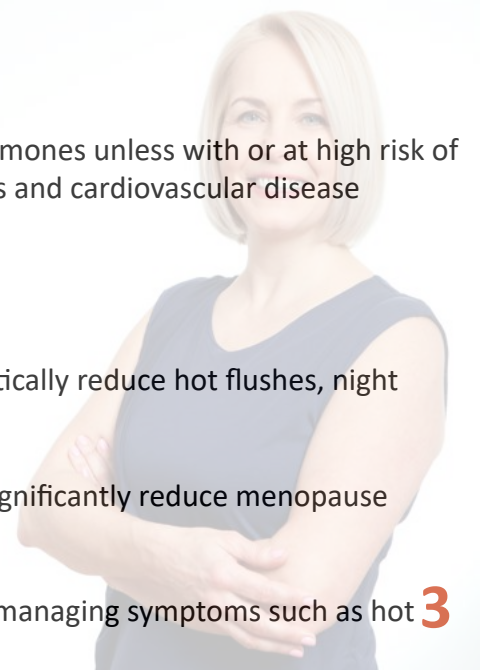
- Women with POI (premature ovarian insufficiency) should take hormones unless with or at high risk of breast cancer to safeguard against an increased risk of osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease
- For the majority of women under the age of 60 HRT is safe.
- Can be taken in tablet, patch or gel form.

Lifestyle changes

Food & Drink - Reducing sugar, caffeine and alcohol can help to dramatically reduce hot flushes, night sweats and improve sleep.

Exercise - Activities such as Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, and Meditation can significantly reduce menopause related anxiety, stress and brain fog.

CBT - cognitive behavioural therapy has been shown to be effective in managing symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats and poor sleep





Line Manager Guidance Template

Line managers have an important role to play when supporting team members experiencing menopause symptoms, in the same way that they would support those with any other health issue.

Our line manager guidance template helps line managers feel confident to support and have conversations with a team member experiencing symptoms and understand the reasonable adjustments that can be made to help team members continue to work to the best of their ability.

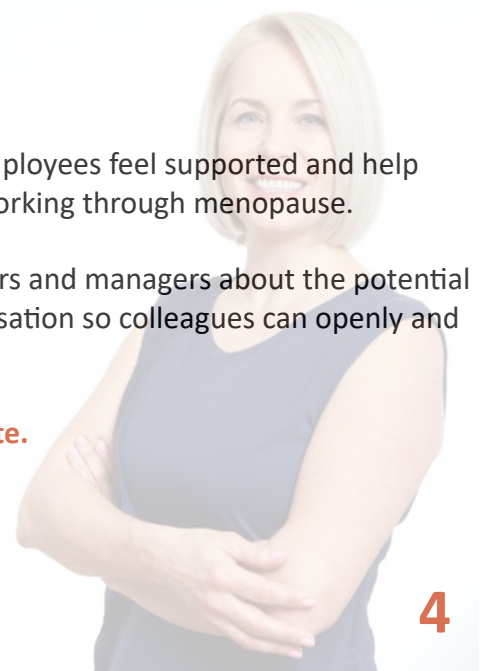
Take a look at [appendix 1](#) for a guidance template.

Menopause Guidance Template

Having a workplace menopause policy or guideline can help ensure employees feel supported and help provide the right environment to improve the experience of women working through menopause.

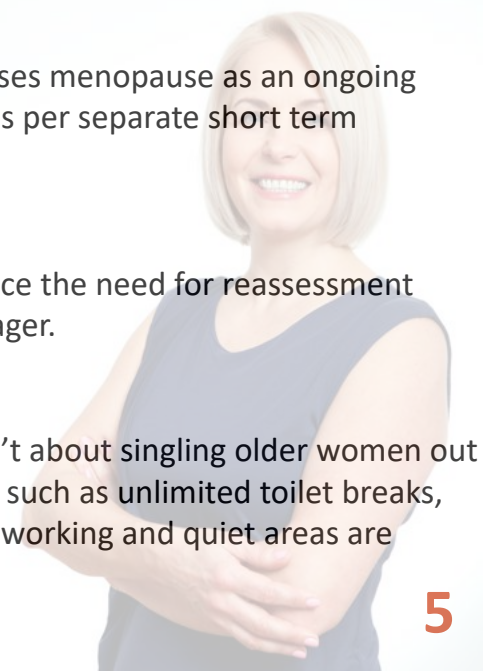
Our menopause guidance template will help educate and inform leaders and managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and raise awareness across the whole organisation so colleagues can openly and comfortably engage in discussions about menopause.

Take a look at [appendix 2](#) for our menopause policy guidance template.



Tips for Promoting a Menopause Friendly Environment

- 1 Foster a workplace culture of openness about health problems in general, including menopause. Ask colleagues how they are on a regular basis to help create an inclusive culture and encourage anyone who needs to, to ask for support.
- 2 All staff to have access to appropriate information and training so they are able to better understand what menopause is, the effects and the support available at work.
- 3 Educate leaders and managers at all levels to ensure an understanding and awareness of menopause recognising it as both a health and safety and equality issue.
- 4 Ensure menopause awareness is included in your onboarding process for all new employees, managers and leaders.
- 5 Establish a recognised, knowledgeable and confidential workplace point of contact that a person can go to if they are uncomfortable speaking directly to their manager.
- 6 Set up a menopause support group where employees affected directly or indirectly can share knowledge, experiences and benefit from peer support. Informal support groups work equally well in person or online.
- 7 Update documentation including policies, guidelines and risk assessments to take into account the needs of a person experiencing menopause at work. Any guidelines or policy should be widely promoted and copies freely available.
- 8 Implement a sickness absence policy which recognises menopause as an ongoing condition and therefore trigger points don't apply as per separate short term absences.
- 9 Introduce reasonable adjustment passports to reduce the need for reassessment each time a person changes role or has a new manager.
- 10 Recognising menopause awareness and support isn't about singling older women out for special treatment but that workplace provisions such as unlimited toilet breaks, access to sanitary products, regular breaks, flexible working and quiet areas are beneficial to all staff.



Menopause FAQs

Is there a test to determine when a woman is experiencing an early menopause?

The most common test is a blood test measuring your level of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH). If you have low levels of oestrogen your FSH level is usually raised and it's likely you are menopausal. The test should be repeated approx. 6 weeks later. However, as hormone levels can fluctuate you can be menopausal despite a normal FSH level result.



How long does perimenopause last?

The average age for menopause in the UK is 51 and for the majority perimenopause symptoms begin around the age of 45.

How do you know when your menopause is over?

Menopause symptoms typically last between four and eight years but there isn't a specific start and end point.

Is HRT safe?

In November 2015 the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidelines on the menopause. They provide clear statements regarding the benefits and risks of HRT www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23



How do hormonal contraceptives affect the menopause?

There is no evidence to suggest hormonal contraceptives affect the timing of your menopause but because hormonal implants stop your periods it's not always clear if you've gone into menopause or not.

Is menopause different for someone who hasn't had children?

Menopause is not impacted by the timing of your first period, whether you've had children or if you've breastfed.

What are the other options aside from HRT to manage symptoms?

Lifestyle changes can be equally effective for managing symptoms such as hot flushes, brain fog, poor sleep, night sweats, mood swings, low energy levels and anxiety:

- Reduce caffeine and alcohol
- Increase protein such as eggs, fish and beans
- Eat good fats including avocado, coconut oil and nuts
- Eat foods containing phytoestrogens like spinach, broccoli and kale
- Exercise regularly
- Practice calming techniques such as yoga and meditation
- CBT



NICE National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. These explain how a GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer.

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23



Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) POI information and support on early menopause.

www.daisynetwork.org.uk



Royal College of
Obstetricians &
Gynaecologists

Information on hysterectomy This provides an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy.

www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/hysterectomy



Find a specialist Locate your nearest BMS-recognised menopause specialist.

<https://thebms.org.uk/find-a-menopause-specialist>

HEALTH & HER

Health & Her Practical expert advice and handpicked products for women experiencing perimenopause and menopause. (Use promo code JULIE10 for 10% discount off products)

www.healthandher.com



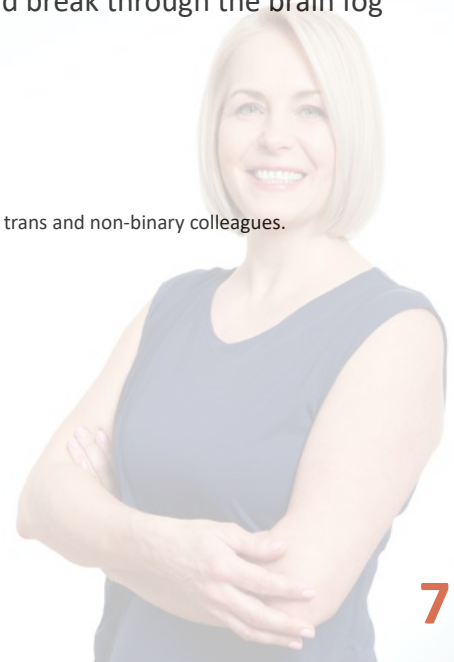
The Happy Menopause Monthly podcast featuring a range of expert guests full of brilliant diet and lifestyle advice.

www.well-well-well.co.uk/podcast



The Hot Flush Freedom Challenge Paperback or ebook outlining a fun, easy 10 day challenge to help you cool down, calm down and break through the brain fog of menopause. www.juliedennis.net/book

Note: throughout this document the term 'woman' or 'women' is inclusive of trans and non-binary colleagues.



Appendix 1 - Line Manage Guidance Template

Introduction

It is [INSERT COMPANY NAME] aim that all staff experiencing difficulties because of menopausal symptoms are supported as much as possible.

Line managers have an important role to play when supporting team members experiencing menopause symptoms, in the same way that they would support those with any other health issue.

Objectives

- Ensure all managers are clear and confident in supporting staff experiencing menopause symptoms at work
- Know how to conduct a confident conversation with a team member experiencing symptoms
- Understand the reasonable adjustments that can help team members to continue to work to the best of their ability

Definitions

Menopause is when a woman stops having periods and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. It is generally defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause in the UK is 51 but it can be earlier or later than this, either naturally or due to surgery or illness.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience physical and / or psychological symptoms. This can start five years before menopause.

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

Everyone is different. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. Not everyone will experience every symptom and some may not notice any at all. However, three out of four women will, and one in four could experience severe symptoms.

Symptoms can include hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, headaches or worsening migraines, poor concentration, fatigue, depression, anxiety, palpitations, panic attacks, mood changes, skin changes, urinary infections, and joint pain.

Note that whilst Menopause is not an illness there may be times when the symptoms are severe enough to cause the employee to take an absence of sickness.

Roles & Responsibilities

- Ensure all your team members are aware of the company menopause policy / guidelines
- Stay informed about the symptoms and range of support available internally including making every effort to attend training provided
- Be open to having menopause related discussions with team members
- Consider requests for support and adjustments
- Act as the first point of contact if someone needs to discuss their health concerns
- Consult with HR, OH or any other business team applicable to implement policies and practices that can help someone experiencing menopause to feel supported, and to be effective in their role
- Keep in touch if a team member is absent due to symptoms of menopause and develop an effective Return To Work plan
- If someone tells you about their health condition, including menopausal symptoms, this should be treated as confidential. If they want information about their condition to be shared, consent must be explicit

Guidance for discussions

Discussing Menopause should be treated with the same respect, sensitivity and confidentiality as if discussing any other health issue.



[INSERT COMPANY NAME] recognise that every person is different, and it is therefore not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

If a team member wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a team member wishes to speak about a family member for general guidance:

- Arrange a suitable meeting room to avoid interruptions and maintain confidentiality
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- Some individuals may be very private and not wish to discuss it, whilst others may be very open to discussions.
- Ask general, open questions such as 'How are you doing at the moment?' or 'I've noticed you've been arriving late recently, and I wondered if you're okay?'
- Give the employee ample opportunity to explain the situation in their own words, and avoid making assumptions - menopause might not be the issue
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom

Line managers should note that they do not necessarily always have to instigate conversations, the employee should also take responsibility to approach their line manager.

Reasonable Adjustments

Adjustments should be tailored to address the issues experienced specifically by that individual and should be identified through discussions with the individual and other relevant experts (where appropriate). The following adjustments could be considered:

- Reviewing of workplace equipment such as chairs, keyboards, mice, monitors, alternative telephones, headsets, desk-top or USB fans
- Relocation of desks away from direct sources of heat eg. near air conditioning vents or windows
- Facilitating a comfortable working environment wherever possible including adequate drinking water supplies, temperature-controlled areas, and access to toilets and showers or washing facilities
- Allowing more frequent breaks
- Adapt uniforms to improve comfort and make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed
- Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks
- Address work-related stress by carrying out a stress risk assessment
- Signpost to an employee assistance programme
- Allow time out from others when needed, to have some quiet time or undertake relaxation or mindfulness activities
- Provide access to a quiet space to work
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work
- Considering flexible working arrangements where business needs permit eg working from a different location, temporary or permanent reduction in working hours (with a consequent reduction in salary if the change is permanent) if that is an option, temporary adjustment of working duties or timings of meetings
- Adjustment of sickness trigger points under the attendance management procedures for staff likely to be covered by the Equality Act

Further Information

Workplace menopause support group contact: [insert name]

HR Contact: [insert name]

Occupational Health: [insert name]

NB: Throughout this document the term 'woman' or 'women' is inclusive of our trans and non-binary colleagues.

Appendix 2 - Menopause Policy / Guidance Template

Introduction

[INSERT COMPANY NAME] are committed to creating an inclusive workplace for everyone who works here.

The changing demographics of the UK workforce means that between 75% and 80% of women of a menopausal age are in work.

Menopause is a natural part of the female cycle, and yet isn't always an easy transition. However with the right support, it can be much better and improve their experience at work and home.

Menopause should not be a taboo topic but one that everyone can understand and be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment.

This policy sets out guidelines for all our people on providing the right environment and support to improve the experience of women working through menopause.

Objectives

- Raise awareness across the whole organisation so colleagues can openly and comfortably engage in discussions about menopause
- Educate and inform leaders and managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women at work
- Assure women experiencing menopause symptoms that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause

Definitions

Menopause is when a woman stops having periods and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. It is generally defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause in the UK is 51 but it can be earlier or later than this, either naturally or due to surgery or illness.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience physical and / or psychological symptoms. This can start five years before menopause.

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

Symptoms of menopause

Every woman is different. Not every woman will experience every symptom and some may not notice any at all. However, three out of four will, and one in four could experience severe symptoms.

It should be noted that people from the transgender and non binary communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Their experiences will differ too.

Perceptions of menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital / civil partnership status.

Symptoms can include hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, headaches or worsening migraines, poor concentration, fatigue, depression, anxiety, palpitations, panic attacks, mood changes, skin changes, urinary infections, and joint pain.

Managing symptoms

There are a number of ways to manage symptoms from the medical approach to natural approaches including dietary and lifestyle changes.

The decision of how to manage symptoms is down to the individual and we encourage each individual to seek independent medical and / or nutrition and diet advice.

Roles & Responsibilities

The company is responsible for:

- Promoting a diverse and inclusive culture where everyone feels comfortable being themselves.

The role of HR is to:

- Offer guidance to managers on interpretation of policy / guidance.
- Attend training sessions.
- Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of training policy / guidance with regards to related absenteeism, presenteeism and performance.

The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice
- Provide support and advice to HR and Line Managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments
- Record and report all cases relating to menopausal symptoms

All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the company menopause Policy / Guidance and accompanying Line Manager guidance
- Be ready and willing to have open and transparent discussions about menopause
- Record adjustments agreed, actions to be implemented and ensure ongoing dialogue and follow up

All staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their own health
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers, HR and Occupational Health
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment

Workplace adjustments

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION] is committed to taking a positive and supportive approach towards people experiencing menopause symptoms at work and recognize that different levels of support and adjustment will be needed for different individuals.

Adjustments could include:

- Fans at workstations, moving desks nearer to windows
- Ensure all PPE is size appropriate
- Provision of a quiet working area
- Temporary adjustment to working hours
- Take account of peripatetic worker schedules and make provision for access to toilet facilities during the day
- Carry out a stress risk assessment
- Provide access to counselling services

Links to other internal policies

Eg Flexible working, Stress Management, Health & Wellbeing, Absence Management, Mental Health Awareness

External links

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. These explain how a GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer.
www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23
- National Health Services. This provides an overview of menopause:
www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx
- Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). POI information and support on early menopause.
www.daisynetwork.org.uk

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