

Menopause Guidance

This guidance is designed to help managers support their staff in relation to menopause. Please note that this document was prepared before the release of the Labour Government's menopause guidance, which is part of their manifesto and we will update this document to reflect any significant changes in due course.

Document Status

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Introduction

- Menopause is a natural stage of life when an individual's oestrogen levels decline, and they stop menstruating. Symptoms can be experienced over several years, so it's a transitional phase rather than a 'one-off' event. It typically affects individuals between the ages of 45 and 55, but for some, this can be later or earlier in their life.
- Early menopause (before 45 years) can happen naturally (known as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency) or due to certain treatments, e.g., for cancer or ovary removal and is known as induced or surgical menopause.
- The 'perimenopause' is the phase leading up to the menopause when an individual's hormone balance starts to change. During this time, they may start to experience menopause symptoms whilst still having periods.
- Individuals are said to have reached the menopause when they haven't had a period for over a year. The symptoms last on average for four years, but for some can last much longer.

- It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities.

Symptoms

- Some symptoms of menopause are easier to spot than others. Here are a few of the most common. However, bear in mind that this is not an exhaustive or exclusive list and some may be present and some not. They can also fluctuate and be experienced to varying degrees.
 - Hot flushes / night sweats
 - Skin changes – dryness / acne / general irritation
 - Palpitations
 - Muscle and joint stiffness, aches, and pains
 - Irregular or altered periods
 - Weight gain
 - Recurrent urinary tract infections
 - Headaches
 - Sleep disturbance leading to tiredness and other issues
 - Changes in mood, e.g. depression, anxiety, memory loss, panic attacks, reduced concentration
 - Exacerbate symptoms of pre-existing conditions (for example migraine and osteoporosis)
- For some individuals, being at work may make their symptoms worse. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause symptoms such as hot flushes, dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations.
- Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for staff to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood and anxiety may impact on decision-making and relationships with colleagues.
- The menopause will affect everybody differently – some individuals may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety. The response should be adapted to staff affected by the menopause on a case-by-case basis.

Legislation and guidance

- Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all staff, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that employers assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees. This requires undertaking general risk assessments, which should include specific risks to the health of staff affected by the menopause.
- The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against an individual based on the protected characteristics, which include age, sex and disability. Employers are under

a statutory duty to consider whether any reasonable adjustments are required to alleviate any disadvantages staff encounter based on these characteristics. Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 states that a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

- Ongoing symptoms linked to the menopause may meet the definition of a disability and where they do, employers will be required to consider whether any reasonable adjustments are required to alleviate any disadvantage. Any such adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis and, where appropriate, staff affected by the menopause will be offered a variety of approaches to support them.

Key Manager Actions and Support

- An important role for the manager is to listen and support by identifying any adjustments needed at work. The easier you make it for someone to open up to you, the easier it will be to identify the support they need. Menopause can affect people's confidence and it can be very daunting talking to someone who has no knowledge or awareness of the menopause.
- In some circumstances it may be beneficial to have a chaperone or arrange for a female colleague or another appropriate manager to initiate a conversation. Make sure that there is a good privacy, with minimal interruptions and adequate time for any meeting or conversation to take place. Managers might also consider additional training
- The more supportive and knowledgeable you are about the range of menopausal symptoms, the less likely that individuals will feel embarrassed to approach you and discuss how the menopause is affecting their health and their work. Ensure you are aware of any relevant policies and procedures and provide that information to staff members to support their health and wellbeing.
- If someone's performance is suffering, it's important to help them address the root cause. Whilst in many cases individuals experience mild symptoms, in some cases the menopause can be serious enough to affect a person's performance at work. In this situation it's in everyone's best interest to discuss potential adjustments that could help the individual perform to their full potential.
- If you are part of an organisation with more than 250 employees, you will be required to have a Menopause Action Plan
- Don't make assumptions – everyone is different, so take your lead from the individual. Discussing any health condition can be a sensitive and personal issue.
- Ask – You will know your staff member best, but in general most people would prefer a concerned and genuine enquiry about how they are as opposed to silence.
- Regular contact – regular and informal one to ones can provide opportunities for conversation. The health and wellbeing of any staff member should be a regular point of discussion.
- Using an individual menopause action plan (a template is provided at the end of this document) can be a way of structuring the conversation, allowing both parties the opportunity to make suggestions around support or adjustments.

- Monitor sickness absence – have support meetings with staff if any patterns emerge.

Reasonable Adjustments

- Simple changes to someone's role or working environment can help ensure the menopause does not become a barrier to performance.
- Start by having a confidential, two-way conversation with the individual concerned, to identify the specific issues that person is experiencing.
- Consider involving relevant experts where appropriate, such as an occupational health practitioner, to help identify appropriate adjustments that could be put in place to help ease the impact of their symptoms on their work.
- You should record what has been discussed and agreed.

Here are some **non-exhaustive** adjustments you can/should consider, subject to their relevance, practicability and reasonableness :

Sleep disruption

- considering requests for changes to working arrangements, eg temporary part-time working
- Access to a quiet space at work

Heavy or irregular periods

- Easy access to water and washrooms, including provision of short term cover
- Allow for more frequent toilet breaks
- Sanitary products in washrooms

Muscular aches and joint pain

- Temporary changes to working patterns
- Opportunity for free movement/mobility if that helps

Hot flushes / daytime sweats

- Provision of a fan in the office / classroom, move desk near the window
- Easy access to drinking water and washrooms
- Ensuring it is possible to regulate temperature in a classroom or other eg; turning down radiators
- Ensuring adequate ventilation eg; windows can be opened safely

Headaches and fatigue

- Temporary changes to working patterns
- Provision of quiet work area / rest room where possible / appropriate

- Easy access to water
- Regular breaks and opportunity to take medication

Psychological issues (e.g. loss of concentration)

- Encourage conversation
- Consider risk assessment
- Signpost to employee assistance programme such as Health Assured (if applicable)
- Identify a work 'buddy'
- Allow time for breaks in the work day
- Access to a break out or quiet space at work where possible / appropriate take a flexible approach and check in regularly with the staff member

An individual menopause action plan can also help document any adjustments agreed.

Role of staff members affected by the menopause

- Staff who are experiencing menopausal symptoms that are impacting their health and wellbeing at work should be encouraged to share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with their line manager.
- Staff should be prepared to seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance, but to engage with other support also, for example Occupational Health.
- Access the school's/ Trust's employee assistance programme for further support (if appropriate)

Further information

- There are many external organisations which you can access that have a specific remit for menopause, e.g.:
 - [Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
 - [Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)
 - [British Menopause Society | For healthcare professionals and others specialising in post reproductive health \(thebms.org.uk\)](http://thebms.org.uk)

Individual Menopause Action Plan

Employee name		Date of discussion
Line manager name		

Actions	Considerations	What is already being done?	What further action is necessary	Action by whom	Action by when	Date achieved
Information on menopause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the staff member have access to information on menopause, relevant policies on attendance management, flexible working? 					
Sickness reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there the facility for those who are not able to attend work due to menopausal symptoms to report these to a female manager or other point of contact? 					
Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the appropriate mechanisms in place to 					

	<p>deal with other related issues such as stress?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a stress risk assessment need to be completed? 					
Occupational health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the staff member been made aware of the facility to make an occupational health (OH) referral and support to remain in the workplace? • Do they need a OH referral? 					
Support groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the member of staff aware of support groups, staff networks or champions in the workplace that may be able to help? 					
Workstations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are workstations/locations easily accessible to sanitary and rest facilities? 					
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there private changing and washing facilities available? • Is there access to sanitary products? • Does the staff member have easy access to 					

	sanitary products and washing facilities?					
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is ventilation available and is it regularly maintained? • Is additional ventilation provided if necessary? 					
Environment/duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have workstation risk assessments been reviewed to take menopause into account? • Are there opportunities to switch to lighter or different duties if a risk assessment identifies this as required? • Do manual handling assessments take any issues around menopause into account? • Are there flexible arrangements in place in relation to breaks? • Can start and finish times be adjusted as part of flexible working agreement? • Is the role suitable for agile working? 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have work processes been assessed to see if any reasonable adjustments are needed? • Are humidifiers functioning, if applicable? • Is the noise level suitable? • Is the worker experiencing any fatigue – mental or physical? • Is there sufficient and suitable workspace? What mechanisms are in place to manage remote working and access to facilities? 					
Working conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a suitable work pattern? • Is the person working alone? • Is there overtime in the schedule? • Is there travel for work involved? 					
Other hazards: please identify						

