



Intranet Key Content Recommendations





Introduction

About menopause

Menopause is a phase of life. While some sail through it with barely a symptom, it isn't an easy transition for all. With the right support we can improve their experience at work and in their personal lives. We want to help everyone feel comfortable to have open and honest conversations about menopause, never feeling that the subject is taboo or off limits.

The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 8 in 10 of those going through menopause are in work. Research shows that the majority are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, or ask for the support or adjustments they may need.

Let's get the conversation started...

Company statement:

It's a good idea to open with a statement about why you are introducing this guidance and how this fits into your organisational objectives. This is also a good place to introduce the message that menopause awareness is for everyone - not just for women - a message which you can reinforce throughout.

Internal links:

Can you add a link to what you're doing including your guidance document when it goes live.

External:

[What does Menopause Friendly Accreditation mean?](#)

Inclusivity:

Menopause is an inclusive subject. Anyone can be affected by menopause, either first-hand or through their relationship at work or at home. Here is an example inclusion statement:

Everyone's experience of menopause is different. People experience different symptoms, have different views or philosophies about how they manage them and different medical histories, too. This policy sets out how our organisation supports those impacted by menopause at work.

People of diverse gender expressions and identities experience menopause, and although we may use the terms 'women' 'female' 'her' when quoting specific research, this policy is focused on how everyone can be supported.



Menopause Facts

The average age of menopause is **51**, usually between 45 – 55. It can be **earlier** than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

- Everyone **experiences menopause differently**, both in terms of their symptoms and their personal preference in managing them.
- **3 in 4** experience menopause symptoms, **1 in 4** of these experience serious symptoms.
- We want to encourage menopause conversations and make sure **colleagues get the support** they need.

Menopause awareness is not just for women, it's for all **colleagues**

What is menopause?

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in life that occurs when hormones change and eventually menstruation stops. Someone is said to have reached menopause when they have had no period for 12 consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally).

The average menopause age is 45-55, however it can be earlier naturally or due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when someone may experience changes and menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when periods have ceased for 12 consecutive months and for the rest of life..

When we talk about menopause, we are referring to any of these stages.





Menopause Facts

What are the the signs symptoms of menopause?

Everyone is different, some may not experience any symptoms at all. However, 3 in 4 may experience symptoms and as many as 1 in 4 of these may experience serious symptoms.

Symptoms can be both physical or psychological. Below is a list of the most common symptoms reported as having the biggest impact at work:

- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia or fatigue
- Hot flushes during the day or night
- Low mood, depression or changes in mood
- Nervousness, worry or anxiety
- Reduced ability to concentrate or focus
- Problems with memory recall
- Migraines or headaches
- Aches and pains
- Irregular and/or heavy periods
- Urinary issues, e.g. increased frequency

Thinking about long-term health, too

Understanding menopause is more than just being aware of the signs and symptoms, it's about long-term health, too. As hormone levels change, there is a need to take extra care about wellbeing, in particular heart and bone health. Help and support from their medical practitioner is also important here.

Links:

Menopause signs and symptoms: [NHS menopause information](#)

Information about menopause and treatment options: The NICE guidelines explain how GP's determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>

Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) information and support on very early menopause:
<https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>



Managing menopause symptoms and long-term health

Just as everyone's menopause is different, so is their personal choice about how to manage symptoms and long-term health. Considerations around benefits and risks need to be taken into account, alongside their individual medical history. Some may prefer the medical approach e.g. menopause hormone therapy (MHT), while others prefer a complementary approach or to make lifestyle changes. It's about finding the right combination of what works for each individual. But please don't wait until any symptoms are unbearable. It's important to get the right advice and help as soon as possible.

Medical

Your GP will be able to discuss medical options with you, including Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). There are many myths about MHT, so the best thing to do is research the facts on up-to-date, trusted websites before your meeting with the GP. A little preparation will help you get the best from your appointment. You could record your symptoms, detail your menstrual cycle history, and research how you'd like to manage symptoms and long-term health.

GPs use the NICE guidelines to help manage menopause – whether it's through HRT or non-hormonal treatments, so reading these information sheets and understanding the different treatment options available to you is a good way to prepare for your appointment. Your GP should also be able to advise you on complementary treatments, including herbal remedies and lifestyle changes that can be beneficial.

External Links:

[Women's Health Concern: Hormone Replacement Therapy Factsheet](#)

[NICE Guidelines](#)

[Talking to your GP about menopause](#)

[Henpicked menopause hub](#)

Herbal and complementary treatments

Some choose to take herbal remedies, such as black cohosh, soya-based foods and red clover for hot flushes. There is little research or evidence to say how effective these are and they can have side-effects or interact with other drugs although many report experiencing benefits. It's best to talk to your GP or a qualified medical herbalist before you choose these and [read this factsheet from Women's Health Concern](#).



Managing menopause symptoms and long-term health

Lifestyle changes

A healthy lifestyle can have a positive impact on both menopausal symptoms and long-term health, so it's important to consider lifestyle changes during and after the menopause.

Get moving

Increasing your physical activity and taking regular exercise could help to reduce any symptoms and improve long-term health, including your heart health. Add in resistance or load-bearing exercise to strengthen your bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

What you eat is important

Enjoying a varied healthy diet is important for everyone, and particularly during and post menopause.

Key recommendations to consider:

- three main meals and two protein-containing snacks per day
- smaller portions
- more oily fish such as salmon, trout, sardines, mackerel or other good sources of healthy fat
- less meat
- less fat and sugar

Some find that certain foods and drinks trigger symptoms like hot flushes e.g. spicy foods, caffeine and alcohol. We're all different, but it's something to be aware of, monitor and decide if you need to make any changes. It's not unusual to put on weight during midlife, especially around the abdomen. Managing your weight could help reduce symptoms like hot flushes, and will also reduce your risk of getting heart disease.

Stop smoking

Smoking can lead to an earlier menopause, and may trigger hot flushes. There are many other good reasons to stop smoking, too. Ask your GP for advice and support. There's also lots of information online from the [NHS Personal Quit Smoking Plan](#) that can help you.





Managing menopause symptoms and long-term health

Manage your stress levels

Increased stress levels can increase symptoms and affect long-term health, particularly during and post menopause. It's a personal choice how you do this, whether it's yoga, mindfulness, going for a walk or just taking time out.

Looking after your mental health is even more important during this time. Research supports the benefits of using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to manage symptoms.

Links:

British Menopause Society (Women's Health Concern) factsheets

- [Menopause: The facts](#)
- [Understanding menopause support booklet](#)
- [Hormone Replacement Therapy – benefits and risks](#)
- [Non-hormonal treatment options for menopause symptoms](#)

Menopause information:

[Henpicked Menopause Hub](#)

The [NICE Guidelines](#) have further information on making choices about managing menopause your way.





Help and support:

Where help and support is available

[Insert internal links to support including EAP or intranet resources if available]

Do you have anything in place for line managers around reasonable adjustments or how to have a sensitive conversation which you could link to?

Do you have a support group or menopause champions which you could link to?

Your GP

Contact your GP surgery if you're struggling with menopause symptoms or would like advice about any aspect of menopause.

Your line manager

If you feel your symptoms are affecting you at work and want to discuss how we can help, please talk to your line manager. All conversations are confidential.

Occupational health

If you would like to speak about possible workplace adjustments, contact the occupational health team or ask your manager to refer you.

Employee Assistance Programme

[insert links here]





Talking about menopause

Talking about menopause Menopause is a phase of life. We all need to feel comfortable talking about it, and to ask for help and support if needed, whether it's for you personally or someone around you.

We're getting the conversation started and here are some tips on supporting yourself or a colleague.

- Read up on the facts. Choose only reputable organisations offering factual information.
- Appreciate that everyone is different, so don't make assumptions. Whether that's about symptoms (some don't have any), how we manage them or how much we want to talk about it.
- Just ask 'How are you?' and 'What can I do to help?' The human approach is powerful, shows you care, understand and want to support.
- Small changes can make a big difference. Even being able to be open about it is a relief for many.





Talking about menopause

Talking to your line manager

Research tells us that the majority of people don't feel comfortable talking to their line manager about menopause. Your line manager is there to help you be at your best at work, so here are some tips:

Booking a meeting means you'll have time and ideally a private office to talk confidentially.

Prepare for your meeting. Keep a diary of your menopause symptoms and how they're affecting you. Think about anything at work that would help you, looking at as many flexible options as you can and including a timeframe.

Explain how your menopause is affecting you at work. For example, you're experiencing hot flushes which are embarrassing you and preventing you from speaking up in meetings. Or night sweats mean you're not sleeping so you're too tired to think clearly and it's taking you longer to make decisions or complete tasks.

Think about how your circumstances could be improved and offer a reasonable solution. Could you work from home or come into work later on some days if poor sleep is an issue for you? If the temperature in your office is making hot flushes worse, can you have a fan or move to a desk near an air conditioning unit or window you can open?

You may only need adjustments temporarily or for a short period of time.

Examples of workplace adjustments include:

- Hot flushes: a desk fan, sit near a window or cooler part of the workplace
- Access to cold water and washroom facilities
- Extra uniform allocation, and ability to adjust uniform for temperature control •
- Flexible work patterns or changing shifts to when concentration is best
- Quiet space for breaks, or shorter, more frequent breaks

Follow up. At the end of the meeting put a time in the diary to meet again, whether that's to agree a way forward, to monitor progress or update your manager on any changes.

If we all create the environment for menopause to be talked about openly these conversations will get easier and easier, for those experiencing it and everyone else.