



Human
Resources

POCKET GUIDE 2021

A teal-tinted background image showing a woman in profile, resting her chin on her hand, looking towards the right. Another person is blurred in the background.

MENOPAUSE

A guide for
employees and
managers on
menopause

Introduction

This pocket guide has been created as a quick reference guide for employees and managers on good practice approaches to supporting individuals who are experiencing the menopause. This content has been produced in accordance with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines – at the same time, this guidance should be interpreted alongside available information (including medical advice) that relates to an individual's particular circumstances.

The School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here. Menopause is a typical part of every woman's life, and it isn't always an easy transition – but with the right support, it can be much better. While recognising that each individual will experience the menopause differently – and that not every individual will experience symptoms – supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden' – it will happen to 50% of the population at some point! Despite this, research shows that the majority of women feel unable to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, and do not ask for the support or adjustments that they may need. We want everyone to understand what the menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment or fear that disclosure might impact on someone's career .

This pocket guide is one of a number of guides available that summarise the information available on important topics. For further support and resources about managing the menopause, please see the Menopause Toolkit which is available on the HR webpages. Employees and managers who would like further advice and support about how to manage a particular situation should contact their HR Partner.



■ Introduction	2
■ What is the menopause?	4
■ What are the symptoms?	5
■ Guidance for employees	6
■ Guidance for line managers	7
■ Further resources	11



What is the menopause?

The menopause is a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. This usually occurs in a woman's late forties or early fifties – although it can happen earlier or later due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

A woman's body starts to change in the build up to the menopause, usually in the mid-forties although this can also happen in their late thirties - this is often termed the 'perimenopause' and is not the same as an early menopause.



















The perimenopause may be accompanied by menopausal symptoms such as irregular periods, hot flushes, night sweats, weight gain and mood swings among others. The 'postmenopause' is the time after menopause has occurred.

It is also important to be aware that trans and non-binary people may go through perimenopausal and/or menopausal symptoms.



What are the symptoms?

The number and severity of menopausal symptoms can vary from person to person. Symptoms of perimenopause and menopause can be the same, and may include:

-  Difficulty sleeping and night sweats
-  Mood swings
-  Hot flushes
-  Taking longer to recover from illness
-  Aches and pains
-  Headaches / migraines
-  Noticeable heartbeats
-  Dry eyes
-  Feeling tired and lacking energy
-  Feeling anxious and panic attacks
-  Struggling to concentrate / foggy memory
-  Irregular periods which can become heavier
-  Urinary problems
-  Putting on weight
-  Skin irritation
-  Loss of confidence
-  Sleep deprivation
-  Depression /stress

■ **Not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe.**

■ Early menopause

As many as 1 in 20 women may go through an early menopause for various reasons, such as if they have had certain medical conditions and health treatment. This may lead to medical complications for the individual, and managers should take this into account in supporting that individual through the menopause.

■ Menopause triggered by a medical procedure

The menopause can be triggered by removal of a woman's ovaries and/or uterus, even if she is young. For menopause triggered by a medical procedure and/or early menopause, the symptoms can be more severe and can increase the risks of certain other medical conditions. More information is available from the NHS website.



Guidance for employees

Currently, many people choose not to disclose their menopausal symptoms at work. This may be for a number of reasons – perhaps they feel embarrassed, do not know their line manager well enough, feel that their manager may be unsympathetic or fear that they might be disadvantaged in the workplace if they admit to having issues. Equally, some staff who take time off work because of the menopause may not tell their manager the real reasons for their absence.

If you are experiencing symptoms of the menopause – or experiencing effects from the ‘perimenopause’ – and they are impacting on your work and/or general wellbeing, you can choose to disclose this directly to your line manager (for example, during a one-to-one meeting or catch-up) or indirectly (such as to your HR Partner or another colleague). Disclosure is entirely up to the individual. At the same time, letting someone else know how you are feeling is a first step towards finding the best ways to support you.

If your line manager becomes aware that you are experiencing menopause symptoms - whether you have notified them or they have found out indirectly - their first step should be to arrange a confidential discussion with you to understand more about the situation and to discuss how best to support you. Afterwards, your manager may briefly summarise in writing what you’ve discussed

as well as next steps, including any agreed adjustments to your physical working environment and/or ways of working. Depending on the situation, your manager may also need to seek further advice (such as from the HR Partner) and/or medical information (through a referral to Occupational Health).

Some people’s experience of the menopause may be relatively ‘unseen’ because their symptoms are mild or unnoticed. For others, the menopause can bring with it significant challenges that impact an individual’s work, wellbeing and/or their engagement within the School community.

Whatever your own personal experiences, remember that you are not alone. This Guide is one step towards building a work culture where staff feel comfortable disclosing when they would benefit from a little extra support. You can also find plenty of useful information elsewhere in the Menopause Toolkit, whether it’s learning from the experiences of others in the Toolkit’s case studies, accessing a range of external resources, or joining in a confidential chat with colleagues through the Menopause Café.

You may also find the School’s **Employee Assistance Programme** - which provides free and confidential 24/7 counselling - a useful resource.

Guidance for line managers

As a line manager, you have an important role to play in facilitating an open working culture where staff feel comfortable raising health or wellbeing issues (including those related to the menopause) and – where such issues are disclosed – working constructively with the employee to agree relevant adjustments in line with an individual's needs. Any adjustments agreed will vary depending on the individual circumstances – the menopause affects everybody differently – but may include physical alterations to the employee's working environment and/or changes to their working pattern.

■ In particular, you should:

- ✓ Familiarise yourself with this Pocket Guide and the other resources contained in the Menopause Toolkit .
- ✓ Be ready and willing to have discussions with employees about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of such conversations and treating them sensitively and professionally.
- ✓ Be ready to be the first point of contact if a member of staff discloses their health concerns and/or wishes to make a change or adjustment to their role or working pattern.
- ✓ Be open to considering and implementing adjustments in support of an employee; these adjustments can be physical (such as providing a fan), but can also involve changes to work patterns and/or making allowances for individuals to diverge from certain agreed expectations or standards (e.g. the employee being able to make changes to what they wear to work if their role involves wearing a uniform).
- ✓ Where adjustments are agreed and implemented, ensure an ongoing dialogue with the employee (including agreed review dates to assess whether agreed adjustments continue to be effective and appropriate). Keep in mind that – since symptoms of the menopause may last for a number of years – any adjustments agreed may need to be in place for a long period and/or changed over time.
- ✓ Manage any sickness absence which is linked to menopausal symptoms in line with the School's procedures, keeping in touch if a member of staff is off work ill and supporting an effective return to work when the member of staff is ready to return.
- ✓ Contact your HR Partner for advice and support as appropriate.
- ✓ Where adjustments are proving unsuccessful, or where symptoms are proving more problematic, explore further options in consultation with the employee (and support from your HR Partner as appropriate) – including additional advice via Occupational Health.
- ✓ Play your part to contribute towards a more supportive working culture within the School by asking people how they are on a regular basis – this can in turn encourage people to raise any concerns they may have. Regular one-to-ones and informal catch-ups with members of your team are opportunities for conversations about any changes to an individual's health situation, including the menopause.
- ✓ Remember that, as a new phase of life, the menopause can also have a positive side for your staff, bringing new energy and a fresh perspective.
- ✓ Don't assume that changes in someone's performance or behaviour are due to the menopause because they are 'at that age'.
 - there might be something else going on.



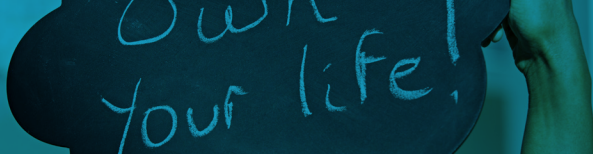
■ Discussing and agreeing adjustments

There are a number of ways, direct and indirect, in which you might become aware that a member of your team is experiencing menopausal symptoms. The employee may choose to disclose this to you directly during a one-to-one meeting or catch-up. Alternatively, it's possible that the onset of the menopause is revealed without the employee having previously suspected it, for example as a result of a medical referral. As a manager, you also have a role to play in being alert to possible symptoms and checking in with individuals so that they have the opportunity to tell you if they are experiencing any problems.

However the information is disclosed, your first step should be to arrange a confidential discussion with the employee so that you can understand more about the situation and discuss how best they can be supported. Adjustments to one or more aspects of the employee's work environment and/or pattern of working are an important consideration.

The menopause impacts each individual in different ways, which makes it difficult to summarise all of the adjustments that may be suitable in a given situation. While many of the suggestions given below focus on physical adjustments, an awareness of the potential non-physical impacts of the menopause can also be a big help – for example, appreciating that a change in work habits or performance might be because an individual is experiencing low moods or is sleep deprived and is not being difficult or lazy.

As a manager, being flexible in how adjustments are implemented and reviewed will make a positive difference to how your staff feel supported and valued. The important thing is to listen to what the individual is telling you and not to make assumptions about what they might, or might not, need.



✓ If the employee is finding that their symptoms are made worse by an aspect of their work set-up, you could suggest that they complete a workstation risk assessment (coordinated via the Health and Safety team) which can help to identify practical issues (such as screen time and position if they use a computer) that can then be addressed.

✓ Other physical factors that may impact on the employee's experience of their symptoms and general comfort may include:

- ☛ The temperature and ventilation of their work area: this is also relevant if they are working from home. A desk fan (or similar cooling advice) would be a typical adjustment.

- ☛ Whether toilet and washroom facilities are easily available.

- ☛ Whether the employee has somewhere suitable to rest, including gender-neutral facilities where appropriate.

- ☛ Whether cold drinking water is easily available.

- ☛ If the employee's role involves wearing a uniform or similar dress code and this is making them too hot or causing skin irritation. You could discuss how best to introduce a little flexibility into what the employee is expected to wear to work.

✓ Agree some meaningful actions and confirm these in writing after the discussion. If the employee's symptoms appear to be especially impactful or unclear, it may be appropriate to seek further advice via an Occupational Health referral – your HR Partner can help with this.

✓ Make sure that the discussion is treated as confidential, except where the employee has agreed that other members of the team (or other colleagues as relevant) can be informed.

■ Top tips for how to approach a sensitive conversation

It's very important to set the right tone whenever you're opening a conversation about a sensitive issue. If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms – or just talk about how they're feeling (keeping in mind that they may not recognise themselves as being symptomatic) – make sure that you:

✓ Allow enough time for the discussion and avoid interruptions – whether you're meeting in person or remotely, make sure that phones are switched off or on silent and that you can't easily be disturbed.

✓ Speak calmly and maintain good eye contact.

✓ Ask simple, open, non-judgmental questions that will help you to understand more about the situation so that you are better placed to discuss appropriate solutions.

✓ Listen actively and carefully: encourage the employee to talk, giving them the time to explain the situation in their own words. Be patient – this may be difficult (even distressing) for the employee and you should be prepared for possible silences.

✓ Everyone is different, so make sure that you take your lead from the employee. The solution should be tailored to the individual.

✓ Keep in mind that that the employee might be embarrassed to discuss a personal matter with their manager, and they may be worrying about the implications for their career. Menopause may affect performance, but it's not a performance issue.

✓ Show empathy and understanding – remember that the situation is largely out of the employee's control and that they are looking for ways to help them manage this natural development in their life.



Further resources

This guide is a key tool for supporting individuals who experience the menopause during their time with the School.

The following internal resources are also important reference points:

- The **Flexible Working Toolkit** provides in-depth guidance about how to introduce and maintain flexible working arrangements that can enable staff to better balance their work and personal circumstances.

- As part of the School's promotion of an enabling and inclusive environment for all, the **Dignity at Work Statement** clarifies expectations of conduct and positive behaviour, as well as setting out the means by which inappropriate behaviour can be easily identified, addressed and resolved.

- LSE's **EDI Strategy** sets out the School's strands of focus in support of equity, diversity and inclusion.

- **LSE Power** – the School's staff network which engages with professional services staff on matters of gender equality – hosts events throughout the year, including the Menopause Café. The work of LSE Power is complemented by the Male Allies Programme, which mobilises the support of male professional services staff.

- The Menopause Café is open to all staff and provides an opportunity to meet up with colleagues for confidential and supportive conversations about the menopause.

All staff are welcome to attend, whether or not they are menopausal.

- Spectrum staff network is a source of support for trans and non-binary individuals.

Staff and managers may also find the following external sources of information useful:

- **CIPD menopause guidance for managers**
www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/

- **NHS guidance on menopause**
www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/

- **Women's Health Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society)**
www.womens-health-concern.org

- **British Menopause Society**
<https://thebms.org.uk>

- **Support for premature menopause**
www.daisynetwork.org.uk

- **Faculty of Occupational Medicine**
<https://www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-for-employers/dealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause>

- **Henpicked, Menopause in the Workplace**
<https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk>

- **Menopause Café – 'gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause'**
www.menopausecafe.net

- **Talking Menopause**
www.talkingmenopause.co.uk

- **The Menopause Exchange**
www.menopause-exchange.co.uk

- **Menopause Matters**
www.menopausematters.co.uk

- **Menopause Support**
<https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>

- **Meg's Menopause**
<https://megsmenopause.com/menopause/>



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