

Menopause at work - Employees



Toolkit: Menopause at work – Employees

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Introduction

Increasingly women are working well into their 50s and 60s and beyond with the number of older women in the workforce is expected to rise. Women are working through perimenopause, menopause and beyond and this can mean managing the demands of work and home life whilst also dealing with sometimes severe symptoms and other issues. It should be noted that for some women, the menopause can naturally occur early or for medical reasons such as surgery; hysterectomy, chemotherapy, aromatase inhibitors (oestrogen suppressants) and treatment for endometriosis.

Although it is women who experience the physical and psychological symptoms of menopause, it is recognised that the menopause can also directly and indirectly affect others both within the workplace and at home. This can include male and female colleagues, family members, same sex partnerships, those going through gender re-assignment and disabled colleagues.

With average female life expectancy in the UK at 83.2 years, many women are living in this post

Why it matters to support colleagues through the menopause at work

Menopause affects everyone it is not just an issue for women

Whether experiencing the menopause first hand as a woman or second hand as a colleague or partner, education and information help to break the taboo.

Equipping line managers to have conversations with their team members and providing an effective framework allows women to feel supported in the workplace.

A healthy environment and culture is better for everyone

Creating an open, honest environment means we can all flourish at work.

Retaining our talent

Twenty-five per cent of menopausal women have considered leaving work because of their symptoms. Providing the right support can retain experienced and knowledgeable employees, saving on recruitment costs which is beneficial to the individual and business success.

Enabling women to be their best at work

A wide-ranging physical and psychological symptoms can feel seriously inhibiting to a woman in her career. By providing the right support and communicating openly enables women – and their teams – to perform at their best.

How you can support your colleagues with the menopause

An individual may be affected by the menopause directly or indirectly, therefore it is important to have an open mind, be sensitive to the issues and not make any assumptions. When someone has spoken with you in confidence, it is important to respect that and to keep the information confidential. Traditionally, the menopause has not been widely discussed in workplaces, with some parties finding it difficult and embarrassing to raise the subject.

Managers and colleagues who want to support female colleagues going through the menopause are therefore often uncertain how to do this. Thankfully due to the increased coverage of the menopause in the media and the increased availability of online support and guidance, conversations around managing the menopause in the workplace are becoming more and more normalised. Menopause transition does not necessarily lead to reduced performance at work and may be managed with consideration, understanding and in some circumstances,



Additional guidance and products

Articles: University of Leicester - [Workplace menopause study finds 'women feel they need to cope alone'](#)

Government research: [Menopause transition: effects on women's economic participation:](#)

Webpages providing more in-depth information:

[NHS website](#)

NHS Livewell – [coping with menopause](#)

NHS Livewell – [Hormone Replacement Therapy](#)

NHS Livewell – [Premature menopause:](#)

[Menopause Matters](#)

The Daisy Network – [Information on premature menopause](#)

Managers Toolkit: Supporting Menopause at Work

September 2019

The symptoms of menopause include:

During menopause a woman's **brain and mood** can be affected causing: depression and anxiety; sleep problems which then leads to tiredness, fatigue and/or dizziness; brain fog leading to reduced concentration, poor information retention and a reduced ability to learn; unexplained mood swings, irritability and emotional outbursts. These symptoms could impact on an individual's performance in terms of coping strategies, pressure of dealing with deadlines and priorities. They may also experience a lack of confidence, anxiety or panic disorder.

Women can experience **hair** loss or hair can become thin, lacklustre and brittle. Women can have **mouth** problems such as bleeding gums and a dry mouth. This can lead to bad breath. They may also experience taste changes and strange oral sensations including a burning tongue.

A woman's **heart** can be affected, causing palpitations and an increased risk of heart disease. A woman's **lungs** can be affected as they may develop new allergies or existing allergies can become worse. For example, asthma, hay fever, dermatitis (see skin/nails below).

A woman's **abdomen** and **gut** can be affected as they may gain weight, develop bloating,

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Menopause at work: for the manager

Your role

Your role as a manager is to have a supportive conversation with your employee, and you are not expected to be an expert or of a healthcare professional/occupational health adviser when discussing the menopause. Please remember to advise employees that they should always consult occupational health/their GP for further support.

When an employee tells you about their issues with the menopause, you should gain an understanding of what the employee is likely to need from you. You can use the information provided in this toolkit as well as your own research to help you start a conversation about the menopause. Annex A is self-identification of menopausal symptoms. Annex B is the Workplace Adjustment Passport; this is what opens discussion between manager and staff. Annex C is a list of all the support available.

The employee may have chosen to speak to a colleague, a different manager or your HR department before raising the subject with you.

You should:

Remember that every individual' v

Agreeing the process for further support

You may find it helpful to set out, in a plan which in some departments is known as a Workplace Adjustment Passport, the adjustments you have both agreed may help at work.

Confidentiality and disclosure

Every employee has the right to privacy in respect of their medical status. It is essential that information is only shared where necessary (such as if the employee divulged a threat to life/suicidal thoughts) and with the consent of the employee. Disclosure without consent can be distressing for the employee concerned and in some instances breach:

- the Data Protection Act 2018
- the Equality Act 2010
- Consider GDPR

Wellbeing and mental health

Menopause can challenge physical and mental wellbeing for many different reasons. Some examples of this can be:

- Mood swings.
- Difficulty concentrating or memory lapses.
- Anxiety or depression.
- Pain and headaches.
- Sleep disorders or fatigue.

As with all employees, the department has a duty of care and managers should watch for symptoms of mental ill health. Generic guidance such as Mental Health - A Guide for Managers

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Procedure

Individual responsibilities

5. Completion of the passport is voluntary. You have control over the content and who it is shared with. You retain ownership of the form throughout.
6. Complete your personal details in the box provided, include as much detail as you feel is appropriate. Share a copy of your passport with your line manager and discuss the details so that they can understand how to support you.
7. A discussion will give you the opportunity to explain to your line manager the issues you have identified. Whilst it is up to you to decide how much to tell your line manager about your disability, health condition or gender reassignment and how it affects you, sharing information can help them to better understand something that they may be unfamiliar with and how they can support you.
8. Any actions agreed and review dates should then be entered on the passport and shared with your line manager. You may also want to discuss the contents to appropriate contacts such as a Fire Warden, Mental Health First Aider or buddy.
9. If your circumstances change e.g. due to your disability, health condition or gender reassignment you should update the passport and speak to your line manager to discuss any impact on your workplace adjustments. Adjustments should be reviewed when there is a change or at least every 12 months. The passport should be updated to reflect any agreed changes in your adjustment requirements.

Line manager responsibilities

10. The Civil Service aims to create an inclusive environment in which employees are confident that they can disclose information about their disabilities, health conditions or gender reassignment, to those with whom they work without fear of discrimination or harassment. Your role as a line manager is to create an inclusive culture where people are comfortable sharing information with you. Your actions and decisions are of great importance in considering any steps, which might be taken to assist an employee in their work. The passport is designed to support you to do this.



11. The Civil Service also has responsibilities to their employees under the Equality Act 2010.
As a line manager, it is your responsibility to understand and comply with the requirements.

12.



Further information

17. Additional guidance on supporting employees can be found in:

departmental Workplace Adjustment guidance

[List of Common Workplace Adjustments](#)

[Workplace Adjustment Line Manager's Best Practice Guide](#)

and the [Line Manager's Best Practice Guide for Supporting Disabled Employees](#)



Workplace Adjustment Passport



Name:	Name of line manager:
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Additional information:



Annex C: Support available regarding Menopause

[Menopause matters](#)

[The British Menopause Society](#)

[NHS menopause pages](#)

[NHS information on HRT](#)