

Menopause

Line manager toolkit

Most women will experience menopausal symptoms in their lifetime, but it's not widely spoken about in the workplace. This toolkit helps line managers approach conversations and support team members who are impacted by the menopause.

1 Understanding the menopause

As a line manager, it's important to know what the menopause is, who it can affect and what the symptoms are.

The menopause is the stage of life when estrogen levels decline and periods stop. This is not exclusive to women, as AFAB and gender-diverse people can also go through the menopause.

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45-55, but this can vary depending on the individual. Symptoms can start in the perimenopause phase, when the hormone balance begins to change, and can last for up to 12 years.¹



Symptoms can be physiological and physical:¹

- **Psychological symptoms:** anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- **Physiological symptoms:** hot flushes, sleep disturbances, night sweats, irregular periods or periods can become light or heavy, muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains, recurrent urinary tract infections including cystitis, headaches, weight gain, palpitations, skin changes and reduced sex drive

¹ NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms/>

2 How managers can help

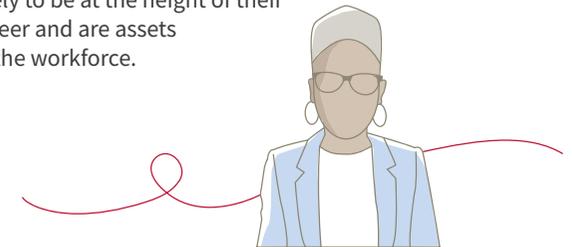
Line managers are the first point of contact for their team and play an important role in their wellbeing. There are a few things you can do to support individuals in your team which can help to:

- Improve morale in the team
- Retain valuable skills and talent
- Reduce sickness absence
- Keep up productivity



Remember

Individuals entering the menopause stage are likely to be at the height of their career and are assets to the workforce.





By building a relationship that centres around trust, team members are more likely to confide in you if they're experiencing periods of difficulty throughout the menopause. Here are some ways you can do this:

- 1** Have regular, informal one-to-ones with your team members - this is a great way to check in and get to know each other.
- 2** Ask colleagues and team members how they are - those simple questions give colleagues the opportunity to open up.
- 3** If your team member comes to you, let them take the lead and share what they would like the outcome of the conversation to be. This would be a good opportunity to show your understanding and be sympathetic to the situation.



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How to create a work environment suitable for the menopause

Ensuring your team members are comfortable in the workplace during the menopause can help them maintain their productivity and morale.

Be realistic on what your team member can achieve whilst dealing with ongoing symptoms. There is no reason they can't produce good quality work even when experiencing symptoms, but it's important to recognise they may not be able to maintain the same level of work as they did before. If they're experiencing bad night's sleep, they may burn out and feel easily overwhelmed. Ensure that you're taking necessary steps to ensure their to-do list doesn't get out of hand.

Here is what you can do to help your team to feel comfortable:



Flexible working hours

This can be helpful if a team member is suffering from sleepless nights and fatigue, flexible hours can help work around this. Working in regular breaks in the individual's schedule could also help.



Setting realistic targets and objectives

This is a great adjustment that can really help an individual keep working at their full potential. Opening up a two-way conversation on goals and objectives shows your team that you're being supportive and understanding. Offer additional support and coaching if necessary.



Understand they may take absence

Understand that regular, short absences may be needed whilst going through the menopause. An individual experiencing ongoing symptoms may need more time off.



Risk assessments

To make the work environment as comfortable as possible, provide access to fans, ventilation, water and facilities.



Supporting mental health

Allow time to practice mindfulness, make sure your team know how to access wellbeing support and allow employees to work from home if they feel anxious.



Your organisation may have access to wellbeing services that can support your employees' mental health.

Find out more on our website

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Importance of an open culture to promote raising awareness

To help everyone feel more comfortable on the topic of the menopause, an open culture can encourage more conversations. Remember, women in their early twenties and male colleagues should have access to materials to help educate them on the menopause, so they can also help support their colleagues.

By educating your team members, you can help remove the stigma of the menopause being an awkward or sensitive topic. You should also make sure that they are signposted to the company's policy.



Extra resources

Learn more about the menopause and for more resources on the topic.

- **Menopause - NHS**
[nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)
- **Women's Health Concern | Confidential Advice, Reassurance and Education**
[womens-health-concern.org](https://www.womens-health-concern.org)
- **British Menopause Society**
thebms.org.uk
- **Supporting You Through Change**
menopausesupport.co.uk
- **Canada Life's Menopause Resources**
canadalife.co.uk/workplace-protection/menopause

