

The Menopause

- Support in the workplace -



*Image taken from The Faculty of Occupational
Medicine, Guidance on Menopause and the Workplace*

The Menopause

1) Menopause: What is it? Symptoms

2) Why is an awareness of the menopause important at work?

3) What can work do to offer support?

4) Resources

1) What is it? (NICE Guidelines 2015)

The menopause is when you stop having periods, usually between ages of 45-55 years and is a stage in every woman's life. The time before this when less oestrogen is produced (varying from a few months to several years), is called the peri-menopause.

For a small number of women menopause may occur prematurely before the age of 40, or later after 55 years. Menopause can be induced by certain medical treatments at any age.

Symptoms (NICE 2015, Faculty of Occupational Medicine [FOM] 2016)

The menopause can affect women in different ways. Symptoms can vary in severity and duration, and some women have few or no symptoms. Symptoms can include "hot flushes, night sweats and related symptoms such as sleep disruption, fatigue and difficulty concentrating.... mood disturbances, anxiety and depression are also reported" (FOM). Symptoms can continue from a few months to several (eight or more) years. For some women symptoms are "severe and distressing" (NICE 2015).

NICE (2015) recommends that "if menopausal symptoms are affecting your day-to-day life, you should see your GP".

2) Why is an awareness of the menopause important at work?

- So those who are undergoing the menopause are aware of what support is available
- Menopause is often a taboo subject, and managers may not be aware it is an issue.
- The symptoms can affect working life
- Dealing with the symptoms can be embarrassing (eg hot flushes causing sweating), diminish confidence and be stressful.
 - For example, Griffiths (2010) found nearly half of women found it somewhat or fairly difficult to cope with work during the menopause. Hot flushes were difficult to

cope with in an environment with poor ventilation, when there were formal meetings and presentations.

- An increasing number of menopausal women are in the workforce
- Many employers do not have clear processes to support women with menopausal symptoms (FOM)
- The Chief Medical Officer (2015) recognises the menopause as a workplace issue.

3) What can work do to offer support?

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- Ensuring a greater awareness of managers about the menopause as being difficult for some women at work
- Talk about it openly
- Facilitating conversations about symptoms. Providing other people women can speak to, if they are reluctant to speak to their line manager
- Making adjustments – eg flexibility of working hours and working arrangements
- Enabling better access to informal and formal sources of support
- Improving the workplace temperature and ventilation (eg fans)
- There is no expectation that women should tell their manager – this is each woman's own decision

This is part of other wellbeing initiatives – [Workplace Wellbeing Framework](#)

Symptoms may be related to other conditions and medical help sought if symptoms persist.

Informal support: [Menopause Support Network](#) - Ability to network with colleagues experiencing similar issues.

4) Resources - (University of Warwick is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these links).

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/patient-leaflets/menopause-diagnosis-and-management/>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information>

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>

<http://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf>

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-005467>

http://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Womens_Experience_of_Working_through_the_Menopause-Dec_2010.pdf

https://age.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/women_menopause_workplace.pdf

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/menopause-should-be-discussed-at-work-as-openly-as-any-other-issue-says-health-chief-a6762056.html>

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2013/06/On-line-Catalogue204723.pdf>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/work/handle-menopause-workplace/>

[http://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Work and the Menopause-A Guide for Managers.pdf](http://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Work_and_the_Menopause-A_Guide_for_Managers.pdf)

<http://www.personneltoday.com/hr/menopause-at-work-how-employers-can-help-staff-manage-the-change/>

<http://www.personneltoday.com/hr/menopause-at-work-how-employers-can-help-staff-manage-the-change/>

<https://www.som.org.uk/sites/som.org.uk/files/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace.pdf>

<http://www.emas-online.org/>

References

Chief Medical Officer (2015) Annual Report 2014- The Health of 51%: women. Department of health, London.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595439/CMO annual report 2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595439/CMO_annual_report_2014.pdf) Accessed 10-10-17

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Griffiths A MacLennan S Wong YYV (2010) Women's experience of working through the menopause. Report for the British Occupational Health Research Foundation.

[http://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Womens Experience of Working through the Menopause-Dec 2010.pdf](http://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Womens_Experience_of_Working_through_the_Menopause-Dec_2010.pdf) Accessed 10-10-17

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2015) Menopause: diagnosis and management. NICE Guidelines (NG23).

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/Sources-of-advice-and-support>. Accessed 10-10-17

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