



Human Resources

MENOPAUSE GUIDANCE

This guidance has been developed to provide information, support and advice to all members of the University about the menopause. It is an important element in fostering an inclusive working environment in which individuals feel able to discuss the menopause and its symptoms and to seek help and support when needed.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The menopause is a natural stage in a woman's life and the way this affects each person is individual and unique. The University aims to foster an inclusive working environment where staff feel able to discuss the menopause and its symptoms and to seek help and support when needed.
- 1.2 The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75-80% of those who are likely to be menopausal are in work. Research shows that the majority of these individuals are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager or to ask for the support or any adjustments that they may need.
- 1.3 Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden'. We want colleagues to understand what menopause is and to feel they are able to talk about it openly without embarrassment.
- 1.4 This document provides support and guidance to staff and managers on managing menopausal symptoms at work.

2 Purpose of this guidance

- 2.1 This guidance has been developed with the intention to:
 - Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause
 - Ensure everyone understands what menopause is and can confidently have conversations
 - Educate and inform managers and others about the potential symptoms of menopause, the effects these may have and how they can support employees in the workplace
 - Ensure that those experiencing menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles
 - Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms
 - Assure staff that we are a responsible employer committed to supporting their needs during menopause

3 Definitions

- 3.1 Menopause is defined as a biological stage that occurs when menstruation stops and the end of natural reproductive life is reached. Usually it is defined as having occurred when an individual has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally). The average age for an individual to reach menopause is 51, however it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.
- 3.2 Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when changes may be experienced, e.g. irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

3.3 Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when an individual has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

4 Symptoms of Menopause

4.1 Not all will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of individuals do experience some symptoms and 25% experienced symptoms that could be classed as severe.

4.2 Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including but not exclusively, hot flushes, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, poor concentration, 'brain fog', headaches loss of confidence and difficulty sleeping.

4.3 Self-management with support from the University, managers and colleagues will help to manage symptoms.

4.4 In accordance with The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) guidelines, staff are advised to seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance.

5 Looking after personal health and wellbeing

5.1 Staff are encouraged to:

- Take a personal responsibility to look after their health
- Be open and honest in conversations with managers / HR and Occupational Health
- Appreciate the positive intentions of managers and others when seeking to support individuals' wellbeing and who might have limited experience of menopause matters
- Be willing to help and support their colleagues who might be experiencing symptoms of menopause
- Understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

5.2 If a member of staff feels unable to speak to their line manager they can speak to HR, their Union or the Employee Assistance Programme advisers.

5.3 All colleagues can access free counselling by contacting the Employee Assistance helpline on 0800 882 4102.

5.4 The University offers staff wellbeing workshops on menopause awareness and these are recommended to staff and managers.

6 Role of the Line Manager

6.1 Line managers are encouraged to:

- Familiarise themselves with this Menopause Guidance and other associated policies to ensure that the best possible support and advice is provided to staff
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
- Have the confidence to initiate a conversation using the guidance in this document and not be inhibited by their own lack of experience of menopause matters
- Use the guidance, signposting and reviewing together with the member of staff to identify how best they can be supported
- Keep record of any adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented, ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates

6.2 There are staff development workshops for managers on the topic of menopause awareness and these are recommended for all managers.

6.3 Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, seek guidance from the appropriate HR Business Partner and consider a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.

6.4 **Appendix 1** sets out further guidance for managers how to support staff who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

7 External links for further guidance

- The National Health Service provides a comprehensive overview of menopause, the symptoms and available treatments. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- Menopause matters provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- The British Menopause Society <https://thebms.org.uk/>
- The Daisy Network charity, which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency <https://www.daisynetwork.org/>
- The Menopause Café, which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause <https://www.menopausecafe.net/>
- Henpicked, an online community that gives people a place to have their say, promote healthy debate and bring about positive change. They also provide 'lunch and learn' videos with industry wide experts that can be accessed on the website <https://henpicked.net/>
- MegsMenopause, an 'honest and frank' look at all things menopause <https://megsmenopause.com/menopause/>
- A campaign to reduce the taboo around menopause <https://rockmymenopause.com/>

- Dr Louise Newson, GP <https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk/>
- We also recommend this practical guide for people managers from the CIPD, which offers guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach the conversations about it appropriately and sensitively. **CIPD guidance** https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/line-manager-guide-to-menopause_tcm18-95174.pdf

Appendix 1 - Managers' Guidance for Colleague Discussions

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic) or if an employee wishes to speak about how menopause may be affecting them and their relationships with others experiencing menopause:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation
- Find an appropriate room that is confidential
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported
- Agree actions and how to implement them
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed and by whom
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting

Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and will vary for individuals. Support can be offered in a variety of ways; some examples are detailed below:

Hot flushes

- Facilitate temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window or away from a heat source
- Provide easy access to drinking water
- Consider adaptations to prescribed uniform, e.g., allowing jacket to be removed
- Provide access to a rest area for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush
- Ensure sanitary products are available in washrooms /key points across the University, to obtain personal protection
- Provide storage space for a change of clothing

Headaches

- Provide access to fresh drinking water
- Facilitate time out to take medication if needed

Low mood

- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of their work area
- Promote support provided through the Employee Assistance Programme website:

www.pamassist.co.uk

Username: uniofworc1

Password: staff

Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse and consider whether it is possible to adjust working pattern/practice accordingly
- Offer agreed protected time to manage workload effectively

Anxiety

- Promote counselling services provided by Employee Assistance helpline
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of their work area

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP.

Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step to suggest, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety. If they have visited their GP and are being supported by them it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.