

Corporate HR - Guide to the Menopause and the Workplace



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1. Introduction

Menopause and the Workplace

This guide has been developed to provide information to employees and their managers about the menopause and how the organisation can support women experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

Purpose of this guide

The Council understands the difficulties and anxieties which are faced by women going through the menopause and this guidance is to make managers and colleagues aware of menopause related issues and how they can support affected women by creating an environment where women feel comfortable enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

By informing managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and their consequences, they can support employees in the workplace by following the principles outlined in this guide.

The guide is also relevant for line managers, partners and colleagues. About 70% of the council's workforce are female, therefore while you might not be directly experiencing the menopause, there is a very strong likelihood that you may work with a colleague who is.

2. What is the Menopause?

The Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating, and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. The menopause is sometimes known as the 'change of life' and it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. As a result of these hormonal changes, many women experience both physical and emotional symptoms.

The time leading up to menopause is called the peri-menopause. During this time, a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Following the menopause, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months, is referred to as Post-menopause.

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3. Symptoms of the Menopause

All women will experience the menopause in their life, most commonly during their working life. The symptoms of the menopause and their severity vary from woman to woman.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, hot flushes, sweats, poor concentration, insomnia, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some women also experience difficulty sleeping.

Approximately 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe, it is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Both employees and line managers have a role and responsibilities to ensure that appropriate workplace support is explored.

The role of the employee

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health and wellbeing;
- Being open and honest in conversations with line managers about their health.

If a member of staff feels unable to speak to their line manager they can speak to another manager, their trade union representative or our Employee Assistance Provider.

The role of the line manager

All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with this Menopause guidance;
- Create a supportive working environment;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Discuss and agree with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required
- Implement agreed adjustments and review as required.

If a line manager feels uncomfortable discussing a delicate health matter with an employee they may wish to utilise our employee assistance provider, PAM Assist, who can give advice on how to approach a difficult conversation with an employee.

PAM Assist may be contacted on the normal EAP telephone number: 0800 247 1100.

In circumstances where the line manager requires advice from a medical practitioner, they may wish to contact our Occupational Health Service' occupational health helpline OHS helpline: 0141 428 3900.

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5. Supporting employees

Managers' Guidance for colleague discussions

We recognise that every woman is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines for all scenarios however the principles below should be followed to identify appropriate support.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (as they may not recognise the symptoms), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below)
- 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, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support for women should be considered as detailed below:

Symptom	Possible Adjustments
Hot Flushes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;• Easy access to drinking water;• Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform, such as by removing a jacket;• Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe flush.
Heavy / Light Periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have access to toilet facilities;• Request an extra uniform.
Headaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;• Offer a quiet space to work;• Have time out to take medication if needed.
Difficulty Sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly when suffering from a lack of sleep.
Low Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree short micro break to allow access to natural light/fresh air to help lift and improve mood.

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Where agreed adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the line manager may consider referring the employee for an occupational health assessment.

6. Related Policies & Guides

The links below provide further relevant information in our conditions of service and guidance documents on Connect:

- [Flexible working procedure](#)
- [Work life balance policy](#)
- [Employee Handbook](#)
- [Leave](#)
- [Maximising attendance policy](#)
- [Sickness absence: leave and pay](#)

7. Further Support & Information

Our employee assistance provider, PAM Assist, can provide relevant support and information to employees.

- You can phone PAM Assist any day, any time, free on: 0800 247 1100.
- You can e-mail PAM Assist at either info@pamwellbeing.co.uk or <mailto:counsellingteam@pamassist.co.uk>

Full details of the methods of contact Workplace Options, including iOS and Android apps are available on [Connect](#). Information is also available from other organisations:

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause
- menopausematters.co.uk
- www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause