

PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE

Our Guide



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About this Guide

This supportive guide covers some of the key facts and symptoms of the menopause, plus provides tips on how to manage these symptoms.

Ultimately, our goal is to talk about the menopause more openly. We want everyone, employees and volunteers, to feel able to speak to their manager and each other about their experiences and for managers to feel confident to offer support.

Understanding the menopause is important for everyone – men and women – whether they are experiencing it themselves or providing support for a colleague, family member or friend.

Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for several reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, gender transitioning, conditions needing hormone treatment, and the menopause. These can all bring about symptoms which could affect anyone at work or in a volunteering role.

Menopause is a transition of life. It's not something which is 'taboo' or off limits as a topic of conversation. We want everyone to feel comfortable and supported at work. Menopause and perimenopause are very personal experiences and will differ from individual to individual. Symptoms will fluctuate during menopause. Different levels of adjustments and support may be required at different times based on individual need.

Menopause facts

Menopause

is defined as a biological stage in life when menstruation stops. The average menopause age is 51, however it can be earlier naturally or due to surgery, illness, or other reasons. Trans and non-binary people can also experience menopause symptoms due to hormonal changes.

Perimenopause

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when changes and menopausal symptoms may be experienced. This can be years before menopause. Many people in their forties (and possibly earlier) may be experiencing symptoms.

Post menopause

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred.

When we talk about menopause in our guidance and information, we are referring to any of these stages.

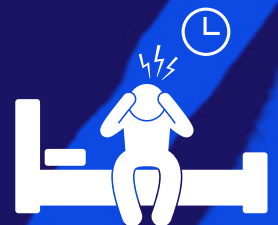




What are the symptoms of menopause?

Everyone is different, some may not experience any symptoms at all. However, 3 in 4 may experience symptoms and as many as 1 in 4 may experience serious symptoms. These can be physical or psychological. Below is a list of the most common symptoms women say affect them at work, however, this list is not exhaustive, please see link in resources below to a [symptom checker](#) *:

- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia or fatigue
- Hot flushes during the day or night
- Low mood, depression, or changes in mood, nervousness, worry or anxiety
- Reduced ability to concentrate or focus
- Problems with memory recall
- Migraines or headaches
- Aches and pains
- Irregular and/or heavy periods
- Urinary issues, e.g. increased frequency



Managing your Menopause

There are a variety of medical and natural approaches to tackle the symptoms some of which are listed at the end of this document You could speak to your GP to discuss any treatment you think you may need. This may include medical options or making some changes to your lifestyle

Talking to your Manager

We recommend having an open and honest conversation with your manager this would be beneficial for both of you. Whilst it may not be the easiest of conversations to have, these top tips should help you achieve this:



Keep notes of your menopause symptoms.

- Think about how these are affecting you; personally, outside of work, inside of work.
- What could make things easier at work? What could your manager do to support you?
- Consider how long you would need these adjustments to be in place for. Think about what the solutions are that would help you.
- Planning what you want to say should help you keep on track and cover of all the points you wish to discuss.
- If you are nervous about the conversation, do not be afraid to tell your manager this. Check before you end the meeting that you have covered all your points.

Talking to your GP

Getting what's right for you from an appointment with your GP is very important.

Making your appointment:

Ask who is the best person in the practice to talk to about the menopause. Consider the length of appointments your surgery offers. Explain to the receptionist that you might need longer, so they can allocate the appropriate time.



Preparing for your appointment with your GP will help you get the most out of your appointment.

Here are some pointers:
Ahead of your appointment, keep notes of:

- Your symptoms; frequency and duration, including menstrual cycle information.
- How these symptoms are affecting you.
- How you are attempting to manage your symptoms.

Guidance for managers



Do not make assumptions

Menopause is different for everyone, and for those who do experience symptoms, these can change and vary over time. Offering the right support at the right time, which means making menopause an open topic of conversation, one which is never taboo or off limits, can make a significant difference.

Having the right conversations

Understandably, some people may find it difficult to speak to you, their manager, about menopause. You will need to reassure them that all conversations will be treated sensitively and confidentially. Your HR contact can help ensure the right support is put in place. Always document any conversations and remember to arrange a follow-up meeting. If you do agree any adjustments, these need to be monitored and reviewed regularly.

Reasonable adjustments

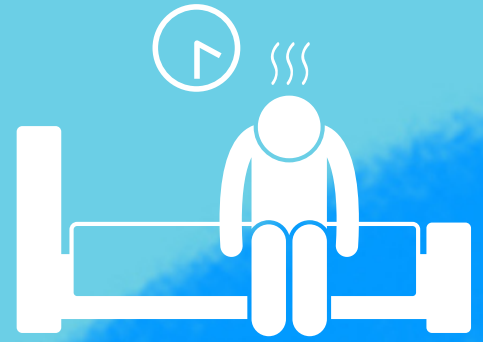
Each situation needs to be considered on its own merit, as what works for one person may not for another. Equally, adjustments depend on the role, so there is a need for everyone involved to be flexible and open-minded.

- Please see the [Reasonable Adjustments](#) page on Arena for further information.
- An Occupational Health assessment might help to support your health and wellbeing in the workplace, our current provider is [Maitland Medical](#).

Common topics and tips:

Sleep disruption

Consider temporary flexible working hours, later start, and finish times.



Hot flushes / headaches

Provide a desk fan or move their desk close to a window and away from heat sources. Encourage regular breaks and good diary and wellbeing management.

Consider reduced time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks (where possible). Provide a quiet space for short breaks and opportunities to take medication.

Psychological symptoms

Encourage team members to discuss concerns at one-to-one meetings with you. Encourage team members to feel comfortable to check in with each other regularly, that your team is a safe space to share how you are feeling – if you want to. Review and discuss possible adjustments to tasks and duties. Signpost to the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

Your role as a manager

Understand what support can be put in place, discuss this further with the team member.

Put in place any additional support, where required and feasible, and consider any alternatives.

Continue to meet on a regular basis to review how things are going and if their needs have changed. (Some people experience symptoms relating to the menopause for several years, and the support they need will change over this period.)

Keep some brief notes of what you have discussed and review and update these, as required.

Make sure you close any meeting with the reassurance that the information given will be kept strictly confidential.

Menopause Dos and Don'ts

Do

Your homework and understand the facts.

Talk about the menopause openly.

Encourage colleagues to have a confidential conversation with you. Discuss reasonable workplace adjustments with them (where possible), and review regularly.

Keep an open mind and always be flexible.

Signpost to our Menopause arena Page, Menopause Yammer Group and other resources below

Respect individual choices regarding treatments, whether that be traditional medicine or alternative medicine.

Always suggest relevant support, such as their GP.



Don't

Make assumptions about menopause.

Share any personal information without consent (confidentiality).

Avoid talking about menopause.

Focus on the problem – instead, explore the solutions.

Address poor performance without appropriate consideration of any health issues.

Offer medical advice.



Remember, you are not expected to offer medical advice and it is important for anyone experiencing menopause symptoms to manage them in the way that's best for them – which is why you should always encourage them to visit their GP for advice.

Helpful Resources

[Yammer Menopause Forum](#)

[Arena page on Menopause](#)

[Arena Wellbeing Page](#)

BUPA – Women’s Health Hub <https://www.bupa.co.uk/womens-health>

Menopause Support - [Symptom Checker](#)

Websites Henpicked: www.henpicked.net

NHS website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

For more information on how menopause symptoms and the trans and non-binary community: <https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk/articles/how-do-hormonal-changes-affect-the-trans-and-non-binary-community/>

Live Better with Menopause: www.livebetterwithmenopause.com

Very Well Health: www.verywellhealth.com/menopause-overview-4581933

British Menopause Society: www.thebms.org.uk

NICE (Menopause): www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23

National Institute of Medicinal Herbalists Here’s a link to find a qualified medical herbalist in your area: <https://www.nimh.org.uk/find-a-herbalist/>

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and menopause: <https://www.womens-healthconcern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/cognitive-behaviour-therapy-cbtmenopausal-symptoms/>

NHS guidelines for vitamin D: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitaminsand-minerals/vitamin-d/>

Complementary/alternative therapies: <https://www.womens-healthconcern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/complementaryalternativetherapies-menopausal-women>

Books

Deborah Garlick: Menopause the change for the better

Men... Let’s Talk Menopause - Ruth Devlin

The one stop guide to menopause - Kathy Abernethy