



Strategic
Command



Menopause Guidance Document February 2021



Did you know?

51 is the average age for women to reach menopause?

1 in 4 women experience serious symptoms?

2 in 5 women said their symptoms had been worse than they had expected?

8 in 10 menopausal women are in work?

1 in 100 women reach menopause before they're 40?

The **majority of women** are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to their line manager

Contents

Menopause in the Workplace	5
Statement.....	5
Aims and Objectives	5
What is the Menopause?.....	5
Introduction	7
What are the Symptoms of Menopause?	7
Support for Managing your Menopause	8
Guidance for Line Managers	9
How can Managers Help?	10
Respecting Confidentiality	10
The Working Environment	10-11
Workplace Adjustments.....	11
Managing Absence and Performance	11

Health and Safety at Work	12
Appendix 1 The Most Frequent Menopausal Symptoms	13
Appendix 2 Talking to your Doctor about Menopause	14
Appendix 3 How to talk to your Line Manager about Menopause	15
Appendix 4 How to have a Supportive Conversation about Menopause	16
Appendix 5 Workplace Adjustments that may help during Menopause	17
Appendix 6 Helpful Links for Further Information	18

***Please Note: Throughout this guide the terms ‘women’, ‘her’ are used. However, this is inclusive of and recognises that people from different communities can also experience symptoms as a result of hormonal changes.**

Menopause in the Workplace – UKStratCom Employee and Line Managers Guidance

Statement | UKStratCom is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. It is also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce. We promote a positive attitude to the menopause and will work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse.

Aims and Objectives | UKStratCom aims to be an inclusive employer and be representative of the public we serve. A brilliant organisation is also one where we work in an environment that supports our wellbeing. An inclusive workplace is one that provides everyone with a sense of belonging, allows everyone to be their authentic selves, and ensures they have a voice in their teams and the organisation. Although it is women who experience the physical and psychological symptoms of menopause, it is recognised that the menopause can also directly and indirectly affect others both within the workplace and at home. This can include male and female colleagues, family members, same sex partnerships, those going through gender re-assignment and disabled colleagues.

- To raise wider awareness and understanding among employees who may be affected by the Menopause.
- To make managers aware of the responsibility to understand the menopause and the related issues that can affect staff.
- To provide clarity and direction on how UKStratCom should deal with menopause related issues, either for individuals experiencing the menopause or those who are affected indirectly for example partners, colleagues or line managers

This Guidance Document has been produced as a strand of the work the UKStratCom People Change Team have been doing in conjunction with Henpicked to ensure that Menopause is regarded as an important area of wellbeing in the workplace at UKStratCom.

What is the Menopause?

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when her hormones change and she stops menstruating. Usually it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally). The average menopause age is 51, however it can be earlier naturally or due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes and menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months and for the rest of her life.

When we talk about Menopause in this guidance, we are referring to any of these stages.



“

Menopausal women
are the fastest-growing
workforce
demographic in the UK

Introduction

At UK Strategic Command, our mission is to create an inclusive environment of mutual respect and fairness in which everyone feels able to contribute. Talking about menopause is just one of the ways we support our employees to fulfil their potential. Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for a number of reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, *trans, conditions needing hormone treatment, and menopause. These can bring about symptoms which could affect a someone at work.

Menopause is a stage of every woman's life, when her hormones fluctuate and change. This isn't always an easy transition, but with the right support it can be much better. While every woman does not experience symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work and in their personal lives. We're living for longer, and working for longer. The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 8 in 10 menopausal women are in work. Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, or ask for the support or any adjustments they may need.

We want everyone to feel comfortable talking about menopause, never feeling that the subject is taboo or off limits. This guide is to explain more about menopause and to help you understand what support is available to you

What are the symptoms of Menopause?

Hormonal changes can result in a wide range of symptoms, both physical and psychological, and the ones women have said affect them most at work include (see appendix 1):

- Hot flushes during the day or night
- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia or fatigue
- 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

Thinking about long-term health, too

It's important to think about long-term health too. As hormone levels change, women need to take extra care about their wellbeing, in particular their heart and bone health.

Support for Managing your Menopause

If you feel that menopausal symptoms are negatively affecting you at work, then it's important to seek support.

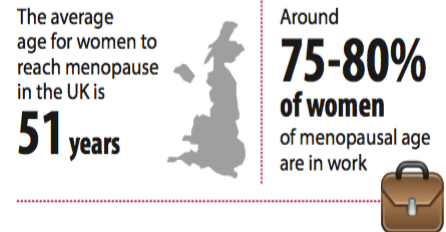
- Employees are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification can help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs. However, it is not always apparent to the individual that their symptoms are menopause related, so an open, two-way conversation is encouraged to prevent any embarrassment.
- If an employee is unable to talk to their own line manager, they should request a discussion with an alternative manager, a trusted colleague or a trade union representative. Either the line manager or alternative manager/colleague/trade union representative will act as an advocate to agree and facilitate appropriate adjustments required. Where it is possible, a 'Menopause Ambassador' in the role of advocate may be able to join the discussion to offer support to the employee.

Your Doctor	We always recommend you visit your Doctor if you're experiencing menopausal symptoms or want to discuss long-term health. They can give advice on medical options, including HRT or other approaches to manage your menopause including diet and lifestyle changes. See appendix 2.
Line Manager	Talk to your line manager if you're experiencing symptoms that are getting in the way of you being at your best at work. Discuss what symptoms are affecting you in your role, and any workplace adjustments you would need while managing your symptoms. Symptoms can change throughout menopause, adjustments may temporary and adapted as and when you need. See appendix 3.
Occupational Health	If needed your line manager may refer you to Occupational Health.
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	This is provided by an external organisation. It is a totally confidential service and is available to all colleagues 24/7. It gives useful advice and counselling on a wide range of issues that may be affecting you at work or at home. You can contact them on this FREE confidential helpline 0800 345 7047. You can also visit the website https://healthassuredeap.co.uk . Insert your username and password.

Guidance for Line Managers

Your role as a line manager is crucial in supporting team members experiencing menopause. The key reasons we need to talk about menopause and provide support are:

- The UK's population is ageing:** We're living for longer and working until later in our lives. More menopausal women are in work than ever before. This means many women work through their menopause and for years afterwards.
- Retaining our talent:** Twenty-five per cent of menopausal women have considered leaving work because of their symptoms. Providing the right support can retain experienced and knowledgeable employees, saving on recruitment costs which is beneficial to the individual and business success.
- Enabling women to be their best at work:** A wide-ranging physical and psychological symptoms can feel seriously inhibiting to a woman in her career. By providing the right support and communicating openly enables women – and their teams – to perform at their best.
- It's the right thing to do for our organisation:** There are significant benefits to creating an inclusive environment where everyone can fulfil their potential. This includes treating everyone fairly and with respect, a reduction in absence, improved performance and motivation, and increased employee retention.
- Menopause is covered by employment law:** Menopause is covered under the Equality Act 2010, in the categories of age, sex and even disability discrimination. It's also covered under the Health & Safety Act 1974, requiring a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.
- It's important for social responsibility:** Introducing menopause in the workplace support is something all responsible employers do.



How can Managers Help?

Some people can find it difficult to talk about their menopause. They may worry that they will be seen as no longer up to their job or coming towards the end of their career. It can be a deeply personal topic and some may find it embarrassing talking about their menopausal symptoms. Some may think of it as a personal matter and nothing to do with work. It is important for you to understand about menopause and be prepared to talk about it. Your role as manager is there to help your team be their best at work. To help you both, preparation is important. This will result in a much better conversation and outcome for you both.

Organisations can help by creating an inclusive, understanding working environment and increase awareness of the potential effect of menopause symptoms on employees. Menopausal symptoms can leave colleagues feeling less confident and at odds with their desired professional image. Some may feel that their performance is negatively affected and will work extremely hard to overcome their perceived shortcomings. As a result, some employees may not feel able to talk about such problems with their manager.

Respecting Confidentiality

The effects of the menopause may result in the need to treat a colleague differently from other employees for a short time. It is good practice to discuss with the employee how they wish any questions from their peers/colleagues to be managed. Confidentiality must be respected unless the employee indicates that they do not mind their team being informed in a fair and respectful way.

The Working Environment

The working environment may inadvertently exacerbate menopausal symptoms and increase discomfort at work. It is also important to consider the culture which includes the values and behaviours of the workplace as well as the physical space. Working in a team which demonstrates respect and consideration can mitigate the potential for negative experiences during the menopause such as physical or emotional issues.

The main types of workplace related issues are due to:

- High workplace temperatures, humidity
- Poor ventilation
- Perceived overcrowding and noise; no access to a quiet or restful space
- Problems with accessing rest or toilet facilities
- Lack of access to drinking water
- Dryness and lack of natural light

It is important for organisations to consider the working environment and to explore what simple, practical steps could be taken to ensure the workplace is comfortable and promotes an inclusive and supportive culture.

Workplace Adjustments

Line Managers may want to facilitate a discussion between a staff member concerning any reasonable workplace adjustments to make because of the Menopause. It is best practice for employees and line managers to review adjustments on a regular basis as needs may change.

Here are some general ideas on possible adjustments to consider:

- Change working hours, or consider remote home.
- Reduce travel and consider dialling into meetings.
- Allow for frequent toilet breaks, especially during long meetings.
- The need to take a break, get up and walk about where stiffness and joint pain is an issue.
- Recognise the potential problem of increased absence in the application of the sickness
- Flexible working allows an individual the opportunity to manage their symptoms by altering their working pattern absence policy.

The purpose of such adjustments is to provide a supportive work environment by removing barriers, wherever possible, that get in the way of an individual doing their job to the best of their ability.

Managing Absence and Performance

Menopause in itself is not an illness but there may be times when the symptoms of menopause transition are severe enough to cause the employee to take sickness absence, or for it to affect performance. Because this issue is intensely personal, a manager may not be aware that any impacts are menopause related. A manager should make all reasonable efforts to ensure an employee is able to share information confidentially to help manage their symptoms whilst at work.

- If the impact of the menopause is resulting in the employee being absent from work, or it is affecting their performance, line managers and employees should consider if an occupational health assessment would be appropriate, to ensure the best support can be put in place for the employee.
- A workplace adjustment may be necessary, after which they can decide how best to support their member of staff.
- When managing an employee with a disability or prolonged sickness (such as someone suffering symptoms related to the menopause) line managers must always follow the departmental supporting attendance process.
- Managers should exercise discretion on sickness absence relating to menopause to avoid trigger point warnings, for example when someone suffers severe menopausal symptoms - they should always seek OH advice and/or speak to a HR caseworker for further advice.

Health and Safety at Work

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (the Act) imposes a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Employers have a responsibility to take into account the difficulties that individuals may experience during the menopause.

Due regard should be paid to temperature, ventilation, the ability to move from sitting to standing to avoid stiffness and pain, toilet facilities and access to cold water. It is important that workplace stress is also considered and addressed properly using the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) stress management standards.

NOTE: Above all, it's in both your best interests to find the right solution. All anyone wants is for your team to be fit and well to enable them to do their job to the best of their ability.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do know your facts • Do talk about menopause • Do follow our process • Do keep an open mind and be flexible • Do provide support and focus on the solution • Do refer to HR and OH, if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't make assumptions about menopause • Don't shy away from talking about menopause • Don't share personal information without consent • Don't address performance issues without checking about health concerns
<p>DON'T GIVE MEDICAL ADVICE BUT DO SUGGEST RELEVANT SUPPORT</p>	

Appendix 1

The Most Frequent Menopausal Symptoms

Every woman experiences menopause differently. Some may not experience any symptoms at all, but around 3 in 4 do and 1 in 4 could experience serious symptoms. There are a wide range of symptoms, both physical and psychological. This is a list of the **most frequent ones**. They may differ in how long they last for and change over time too.

Example Physical Symptoms	Example Psychological Symptoms
<p>Difficulty sleeping or fatigue: Disrupted sleep is a common complaint during the menopause transition, often starting during perimenopause. Some find it hard to fall asleep or stay asleep, while others wake much earlier than usual.</p>	<p>Problems with memory recall: This is one of the lesser known symptoms of hormonal change during menopause. Often referred to as 'brain fog' and includes difficulty processing or retaining information.</p>
<p>Hot flushes: Hot flushes can start during perimenopause and continue through postmenopause years. These can cause embarrassment, can be uncomfortable or result in the need to change clothing during the day. Hot flushes during the night are known as night sweats and can cause difficulty sleeping and fatigue.</p>	<p>Changes in mood: Most people feel low sometimes, but this can also be a menopausal symptom as a result of hormonal changes.</p>
<p>Irregular or changing periods: For many women one of the first signs of the menopause transition is a change in their periods. They may be unusually light or heavy and the frequency may also be affected e.g. every 2 or 3 weeks. Or they may even last for weeks at a time. Eventually they stop altogether.</p>	<p>Anxiety and worry: Anxiety can cause many different symptoms. It might affect how a person could feel physically, mentally and how they behave. It's not always easy to recognise when anxiety is the reason someone is feeling or acting differently and many don't appreciate this can be a menopausal symptom.</p>
<p>Migraines and headaches: Changes in hormone levels can lead to headaches and migraines, or make them worse. Some women have the reverse reaction and may see a reduction in migraine occurrence as they enter menopause.</p>	<p>Difficulty focusing or concentrating: During the menopause transition, some experience problems with focusing or concentration. It may feel like it takes them longer to complete tasks and may undermine their confidence in their ability.</p>
<p>Urinary issues: These can include recurrent urinary tract infections or need to urinate suddenly or more often than usual. These symptoms are often not recognised as being a symptom of menopause and can be treated.</p>	<p>Loss of confidence: This can affect many areas of life, including work and with the range of menopausal symptoms is understandable. Symptoms can start during the perimenopause phase when they may not even be aware it's as a result of hormonal changes.</p>
<p>Joint aches and pains: Menopause may cause joint pain that can affect the knees, shoulders, neck, elbow or hands. Old joint injuries may begin to ache. Many associate this as part of getting older but it can also be a symptom of reducing hormone levels.</p>	

Appendix 2

Talking to your Doctor about Menopause

If menopausal symptoms are getting in the way of you enjoying life, it's time to talk to your doctor. Here are some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

Don't wait until symptoms feel unbearable. Often women feel they must 'put up' with menopausal symptoms, but if they are affecting you then there are things you can do and support available.

Read the NICE guidelines. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines are used by your doctor to determine the type of conversations to have with you and treatments to offer. The guidelines for patients are really useful to read before you see your GP so you know what to expect.

Prepare for your appointment. Keep a list of your symptoms, your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you're feeling, any changes you've noticed. Write them down and take them to your appointment.

If you have any preferences about how you manage symptoms tell them that too e.g. if you'd like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or not. Your doctor will thank you for it and it's more likely that together you'll find the right solution faster.

Ask the receptionist which doctor is best to talk to about menopause. It might not be your usual GP, it could be someone who has had special training in the subject.

Ask for a longer appointment if you think you need it. Some surgeries will do this.

Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion if you don't feel you've received the help you need. Don't be put off, you know how you're feeling and how it's affecting you.

Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area. If there is and you think this would be helpful, ask for a referral.

Take your partner or a friend with you. They will know how the symptoms are affecting you, could support you at the appointment and also find out how to continue supporting you.

What to expect from your doctor. There are certain things a GP should – and should not – do during your appointment.

Remember, your GP is there to help and support you, and you should feel comfortable and confident in talking to them about your symptoms and help you need. Don't think you have to struggle through menopause when there is help and support available.

Appendix 3

How to talk to your Line Manager about Menopause

Research tells us that some women can find it hard to talk to their manager about how menopause is affecting them. However, your manager is there to help you be at your best at work. To help you both, preparation is important. This will result in a much better conversation and outcome for both you and your employer.

- **Prepare for your meeting.** Check out what support is available
- **Keep a diary** of your menopause symptoms and how they're affecting you. Think about what practical, workplace adjustments might help, being flexible and ideally with different options. These may only for a short period of time while you work with your medical professional to alleviate your symptoms.
- **Booking a meeting** means you'll have time and ideally a private office to talk and will be more likely to explain everything in the right way. (*who would book the meeting room – the individual or line manager*)
- **Explain your situation clearly.** Talk about how menopause is affecting you at work, what you're doing to manage your menopause symptoms and how your line manager could help. Discuss what the support may be and timescales e.g. workplace adjustments, or sometimes just knowing they understand helps.

Talk these through with your manager and agree what you both could do. Your line manager may need time to think about the best support. Remember, this may have been on your mind for a long time, but it may be the first time your manager has heard about it. Allow them time to digest the information and seek advice if necessary.

Do you want the conversation to be confidential? Some of us are happy talking about menopause openly, others are not. Talk to your line manager about whether you want the conversation to be kept confidential or if you're happy to discuss it with colleagues. It's your choice.

Follow up. At the end of the meeting put a time in the diary to meet again, whether that's to agree a way forward, to monitor progress or update. Menopause symptoms can change over time.

Above all, it's in both your best interests to find a good solution.

All anyone wants is for you to be fit and well and do your job to the best of your ability. Menopause can be isolating if you don't talk to someone but remember all women go through menopause at some point, so you most certainly are not alone.

Appendix 4

How to have a Supportive Conversation about Menopause

It is important for you to understand menopause and be prepared to talk about it. Your role as a manager is to help your team members be at their best at work. To help you both, preparation is important. This will result in a much better conversation and outcome for both of you.

Preparation for your meeting | Review this document and UK Strategic Command's approach to supporting colleagues experiencing menopause.

Book a meeting | Arrange a time to meet, allowing enough time for the conversation. Think about where you are meeting, finding a room which will allow the conversation to be confidential.

Read up about menopause – know your facts | There's guidance in this document and also look at Appendix 4 – workplace adjustments, to help you think about what could help and you could do. Do keep an open mind and be flexible.

Encourage them to speak openly and honestly | Understand how menopause is affecting them at work, what they're doing to manage their menopause and what you could do to help. Discuss what support they would like e.g. workplace adjustments and timescale. Sometimes it helps just to know someone understands and is there to listen.

Agree with your team member what you can both do | If you need to, take time to find out further information and seek advice, if necessary. Set up a meeting to continue the conversation.

Do they want the conversation to be confidential? | Some people are happy talking about menopause openly, others are not. Talk to your team member about whether they want the conversation to be kept confidential or if they're happy to discuss it with colleagues. It's their choice.

Follow up | At the end of the meeting put a time in the diary to meet up again, whether that's to agree a way forward, to monitor progress or update. Please note that menopause symptoms can change over time.

Above all, it's in both your best interest to find the right solution.

Appendix 5

Workplace Adjustments that may help during Menopause

These will be different for every woman, which is why having individual conversations and being flexible is so important.

Appropriate changes can be made on a case-by-case basis by line managers, thinking about what will support the colleague and the organisational requirements of their role.

Many adjustments will be simple and may vary in the time they are needed. Make sure you record what you've agreed. Here are some suggestions for workplace adjustments to help you think about what could be helpful.

Example Symptoms	Workplace Adjustment
<p>Difficulty sleeping, tiredness or fatigue: This is a common complaint during the menopause transition, often starting during the perimenopause.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review start and finish times – could they be adjusted, or is homeworking an option? • Consider flexibility around breaks, increasing them if possible.
<p>Hot flushes: Hot flushes, or night sweats can start during perimenopause and continue through postmenopause years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a desk fan or hand-held fan. • Can you move their workspace nearer to a window or other source of ventilation? • Ensure access to fresh drinking water.
<p>Difficulty focusing or concentration: During the menopause transition, some experience problems with focusing or concentration. It may feel like it takes them longer to complete tasks and may undermine their confidence in their ability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider adjusting working hours to times of the day when concentration is better or adjust working pattern. • Provide notebooks or other memory aids. • Offer a quiet space for work, if possible. • Agreed protected time to catch up with work, if needed. • Reduce interruptions.
<p>Anxiety or loss of confidence: Anxiety can cause many different symptoms, it might affect how a person could feel physically, mentally or how they behave.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having regular one-to-one discussions. • Talking therapies e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). • Refer to our Employee Assistance Programme or counselling service.

Appendix 6

Helpful Links for Further Information

NHS: menopause information	This provides an overview of menopause. http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx .
RCOG: Menopause information	The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information in a dedicated area of their website at: https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.	These explain how your GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer you. You can find out more information by using the following link https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information .
Early menopause	Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) information and support on very early menopause. You can find out more at https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk
Hysterectomies, oophorectomy information	This provides an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy. Further details can be found at https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk .
Henpicked Menopause Hub	Women's stories, factual information and advice plus videos with the UK's leading experts. Free, regular Lunch & Learn sessions: https://henpicked.net/menopause-hub/