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**MENOPAUSE Guidance**

**FOR STAFF AND MANAGERS**

## PURPOSE

* 1. Menopause is a natural process that some of our staff will go through when their fertility begins to decrease and eventually menstruation stops altogether. The menopause is naturally occurring and usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55 years of age, although it can occur anytime up to the mid 60’s. For some however the menopause happens as a result of medical treatment before the natural menopause is reached. One example would be a surgical procedure to remove the ovaries.
  2. The average age of onset of menopause in the UK is 51 years. Menopause can only be diagnosed retrospectively, that is once a woman or person with ovaries has had no periods for 12 months.
  3. About 1 in 100 people have premature menopause, this occurs when periods stop before 40. Symptoms on average continue for four years from the last period, and 1 in 10 experience symptoms for 12 years.
  4. The years surrounding the menopause are termed the perimenopause and women may experience a wide range of symptoms of varying severity and duration.
  5. Women make up 47% of the UK workforce and approximately 3.5 million are aged over 50. The Trust’s employees a workforce of women and people with ovaries of just under 77%, with approximately 50% aged between 40-60 years.

**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

2.1 The Trust aims to facilitate an open, understanding working environment. This guide has been designed to outline to staff and managers the ways in which the Trust aims to support any employees who are experiencing the menopause, along with educating employees and colleagues who want to support others around them.

2.2 As employers we have a responsibility for the Safety, Health & Wellbeing of our employees and need to be proactive in managing an age-diverse workforce. As of 2023 the Trust has been signed up to the Workplace Menopause Pledge which is an initiative by wellbeingofwomen.org to encourage employers to take positive action to make sure everyone going through the menopause is supported in the workplace.

**3.0 SYMPTOMS**

3.1 Around 30-60% of those going through the menopause or perimenopause experience intermittent physical and / or physiological symptoms. The menopause begins when the ovaries produce reduced levels of hormone oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone. The resulting low and changing levels of hormones, particularly oesrtogen, are thought to be the cause of the menopausal symptoms.

3.1 There are up to 40 symptoms that can occur, the most common symptoms include the following:

* Hot flushes
* Night sweats
* Palpitations
* Sleep disturbances
* Fatigue
* Poor concentration and memory
* Weight gain
* Irritability
* Mood swings
* Aches and pains
* Feeling anxious and / or anxiety attacks
* Dry skin, hair and eyes
* Urinary problems
* Headaches including migraines

3.2 Menopause prior to the age of 45 is uncommon, however early menopause (which is different to perimenopause) affects 1 in 20 in the UK. Early menopause can be triggered by:

* Surgery to remove the ovaries; hysterectomy
* Radiotherapy to the pelvic area and some chemotherapy
* A family history of early menopause
* In some women, with early menopause no reason can be determined.

3.3 In addition to the above, someone who proposes to go through, is going through or has gone through a process, or part of a process, to change their gender from woman to man - may go through the premenopausal and menopausal symptoms.

**4.0 GUIDANCE AND SELF-CARE FOR STAFF**

4.1 For employees who find the menopause symptoms affect health, wellbeing and capacity at work, the following is advisable:

* Find out more about the menopause on our pages on the Intranet
* Seek advice from GP on available treatment options
* Discuss practical needs with Line Manager, Human Resources or another manager the employee is comfortable with. The Trust’s Health Passport could be used to support this available on the Intranet
* Use technology where possible e.g. for notes and reminders
* Avoid hot flush triggers such as spicy food or caffeine, especially before meetings and presentations
* Consider relaxation techniques such as mindfulness or cognitive behavioural therapy as these can help to reduce symptoms
* Talk with supportive colleagues
* Some women may feel uncomfortable discussing issues with their Line Manager. To discuss issues with someone other than the Line Manager contact can be made with the following:
* Occupational Health Service (Team Prevent) by calling **01327 810269 (Legacy WSHT) or 01273 696955 (Legacy BSUH).**

**6.0 GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS**

6.1 At UHSussex we want our staff to feel able to talk openly about health related problems and ask for help. Many people develop their own coping strategies during the menopause however, there are areas for consideration in order to support staff and lessen the impact of this health issue.

* Line Managers can develop a greater awareness and understanding of the menopause so they are aware how it can affect staff at work and what adjustments maybe necessary.
* Provide support when dealing with health conditions arising from the menopause.
* Have regular 1-2-1 discussions with the staff member and discuss any changes to support them at work, examples of this might be:
* Additional uniform to change into part way through a shift
* Provide a fan or locate a workstation near an opening window
* Allowing the staff member to take regular/shorter/more frequent agreed breaks
* Providing a private area where the staff member can rest for a while to help manage their symptoms
* Consider flexible working hours or shift changes. If sleep disturbed, a later start maybe helpful to manage symptoms
* Allowing them to work from home when practical

6.2 Alternatively, both manager and staff member might discuss and agree other changes which should be reviewed if the worker's symptoms alter. For example:

* Changing certain duties in the staff member’ role
* Moving to a more suitable role in the circumstances
* A reduction in hours
* Job share

**6.3** In terms of sickness absence for menopause related issues, Managers should now record this on HealthRoster. Please add a sickness absence via adding an unavailability and selecting the ‘Menopause Related’ reason. If you need advice, please contact the Rostering Team:

**Worthing, St.Richards and Southland sites:**

Call 84573 or email [uhsussex.rostering.team@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.rostering.team@nhs.net)

**All Brighton sites:**

email[uhsussex.erostering@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.erostering@nhs.net)

**7.0 SUPPORTING MENOPAUSE AT WORK**

7.1 A study published by the British Occupational Health Research Foundation (BOHRF) published research by The University of Nottingham, and found that nearly half of the women who took part found it somewhat / fairly difficult to cope with work during the menopausal transition, an equal proportion of women did not find any difficulties. Only five percent reported it to be very / extremely difficult. Nonetheless, menopause symptoms can pose major problems for some, leaving them feeling less confident and at odds with their desired professional image.

7.2 The study also found that the main problems attributed to the menopause were: poor concentration, tiredness, poor memory, feeling low or depressed and lowered confidence. Hot flushes at work were a major source of distress; this was exasperated when working in hot and poorly ventilated environments, formal meetings and highly visible work such as formal presentations.

7.3 There are two main strands of the law that may apply to menopause and perimenopause:

* The Equality Act 2010 protects workers against discrimination. Menopause and perimenopause are not specifically protected under the Equality Act. However, if a worker is treated unfairly because of the menopause and perimenopause, this may amount to discrimination because, for example, of their sex and/or a disability, and/or their age.
* The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 says an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure health, safety and welfare at work.

**8.0 SIGNPOSTING TO OTHER RESOURCES**

* Menopause Matters, website: <http://www.menopausematters.co.uk> is an award winning independent website that provides up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, symptoms and treatment options.
* The Daisy Network, website: <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk> is a registered charity dedicated to providing information and support to women with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI), also known as premature menopause.
* The change’, ‘the climacteric’, ‘the time of life’ - call it what you will, it is an unavoidable fact that all women go through the menopause. Women’s Health Concerns website: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org> offers a confidential, independent service to advise, reassure and educate women of all ages and provides a useful menopause factsheet: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/focus-series/menopause/>
* NICE Menopause: diagnosis and management website: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG23>
* To find out more about early menopause, go to the National Health Service website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause)
* To find out more about the impact of the menopause and provide support and advice to women and men, go to the Royal College of Nursing website: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/womens-health/menopause>

**9.0 APPENDICES**

9.1 Appendix 1 - Guidance on menopause and the workplace (Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians)

[Guidance on Menopause and the workplace (fom)](file:///C:/Users/Levettc002/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/BUCW11LA/%09http:/www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf)

9.2 Appendix 2 - Menopause at work (The NHS Staff Council)

[HSWPG Menopause at Work](https://www.nhsemployers.org/sites/default/files/media/HSWPG-menopause-at-work-March-2020%20FINAL_0.pdf)