

MENOPAUSE

Information for Employees

Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, however for every ten women experiencing menopausal symptoms, six report that it has a negative impact on their work.

With an increase in awareness of the symptoms of Menopause and the right support there is no need for women to suffer in silence. Menopause should not be considered a 'taboo' subject and women should be able to speak openly about it to their managers and colleagues without fear of embarrassment or lack of understanding. It is an issue for men to understand as well as women.

The Council recognises the need for a better awareness and understanding of the Menopause and the impact it can have on women in the workplace. The purpose of this information leaflet is to provide some advice and guidance for employees that are either directly experiencing symptoms of the menopause or are affected by it. A separate guidance has been provided for managers.

What is Menopause?

Menopause means the last menstrual period. Periods stop because the low levels of estrogen and progesterone do not stimulate the lining of the womb (endometrium) in the normal cycle. Hormone levels can fluctuate for several years before eventually becoming so low that the endometrium stays thin and does not bleed.

Perimenopause is the stage from the beginning of menopausal symptoms to the postmenopause.

Postmenopause is the time following the last period, and is usually defined as more than 12 months with no periods in someone with intact ovaries, or immediately following surgery if the ovaries have been removed.

When is Menopause?

The average age of the natural menopause is 51 years, but can occur much earlier or later. Menopause occurring before the age of 45 is called early menopause and before the age of 40 is premature menopause. Late menopause may also occur but by the age of 54, 80% of women will have stopped having periods.

Symptoms of Menopause

Not every woman experiences symptoms however for those that do these can be both physical and psychological and cover a wide range of issues. Some of these symptoms include; hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks/anxiety, heavy/light periods, night sweats, insomnia and changes in mood. These symptoms can typically last 4-8 years.

What you can do at Menopause?

- Find out more about menopause in general and the treatments available to you including alternative therapies;
- Talk to your GP about treatment options and make informed choices;
- Talk to your line manager or another person you feel comfortable with i.e another manager, HR, union rep, about any concerns you have about the impact of the Menopause on you at work;
- Use technology where it can help you – setting up reminders on your phone or taking more notes;
- If you have supportive work colleagues talk about your experiences with them, you may find you're not alone. Humour can help deflect embarrassment and increase your confidence;
- Look into mindfulness techniques you can practice at work and home;
- Adopt a healthy diet and lifestyle - could you exercise more? Stop smoking or set a revised weight goal?

What can others can do to support women who are at the Menopause?

- Do not make assumptions about how someone will be affected by the menopause;
- Allow someone experiencing the menopause to talk about the impact it is having on them; offer an empathetic ear, do not be dismissive of how they are feeling;
- Encourage them to seek relevant support and advise including talking to their line manager if required;
- Understand that some colleagues may require additional support and adjustments as a result of their menopausal symptoms; and be considerate of their needs which may change over time;
- Not share any personal information without consent of the individual.

Available Support/Adjustments

There are a number of existing policies that can provide support/adjustments to an employee whose symptoms of the menopause are having an impact at work. Employees should speak to their line manager should they feel they require any support/adjustments to help them manage the symptoms of the menopause whilst at work. Any adjustments would need to be considered taking into account the needs of the service.

The Employee Counselling Service is also available to employees in these circumstances. Further information can be found here: <http://connect/index.aspx?articleid=3879> or from your line manager.

Further Useful Information

Menopause matters: www.menopausematters.co.uk

Manage my menopause: www.managemymenopause.co.uk

Women's health concern: www.womens-health-concern.org

Menopause matters – The man shed: <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/manshed.php>