



A first line supervisor's guide to the
Menopause



In support of

HeForShe

UN Women Solidarity Movement
for Gender Equality





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When to use this Guide?

This guide is for first line supervisors who are supporting a member of their team going through the menopause. Use this guide to equip you with the knowledge of what the menopause is and how you can offer support as a supervisor.

Every woman will go through the menopause. Therefore, as a supervisor it is most likely that you will support a woman going through the menopause at some point during your career.

The menopause is a natural part of aging that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age. The average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK is 51.

Around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as a **premature menopause**.

Women may also experience the sudden onset of the menopause at any age due to medical intervention, such as cancer or endometriosis treatment.

Trans men and non-binary individuals can also experience menopausal symptoms. Some trans people may take hormones or blockers that result in them experiencing similar symptoms to those going through the menopause.

What is the menopause?

The menopause is where a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to get pregnant naturally. This [NPCC video](#) provides more information.

The menopause usually occurs gradually over a few years. A drop in the hormones oestrogen and progesterone causes the symptoms associated with the menopause.

There are three key stages:



Less oestrogen is gradually produced in the four to eight years leading up to the menopause. This is called the **perimenopause** and the most severe symptoms are usually experienced in the last two years of this stage.

The **menopause** is considered to have occurred once a woman has not had a period for at least a year.

Post menopause refers to the years after the menopause. Symptoms usually ease, however health risks caused by decreased oestrogen can occur, such as osteoporosis.

Medically induced menopause can occur much more suddenly.

Any individual who believes they are experiencing the menopause should contact their GP for diagnosis and potential treatment.

What are menopause symptoms?

Every woman's experience of the menopause is different. Around 8 in 10 women will experience symptoms.

The type of symptom, severity and length of time experienced will vary from woman to woman. Symptoms can also come and go. Therefore, every woman you supervise who goes through the menopause will need bespoke support.

Common symptoms include:

Hot flashes - short sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck and chest which can make your skin red and sweaty.

Night sweats - hot flashes that occur at night.

Problems with memory and concentration.

Heavy periods or irregular periods.

Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTI).

Joint stiffness, aches and pains.

..... **A reduced sex drive.**

Difficulty sleeping - making you feel tired and irritable during the day.

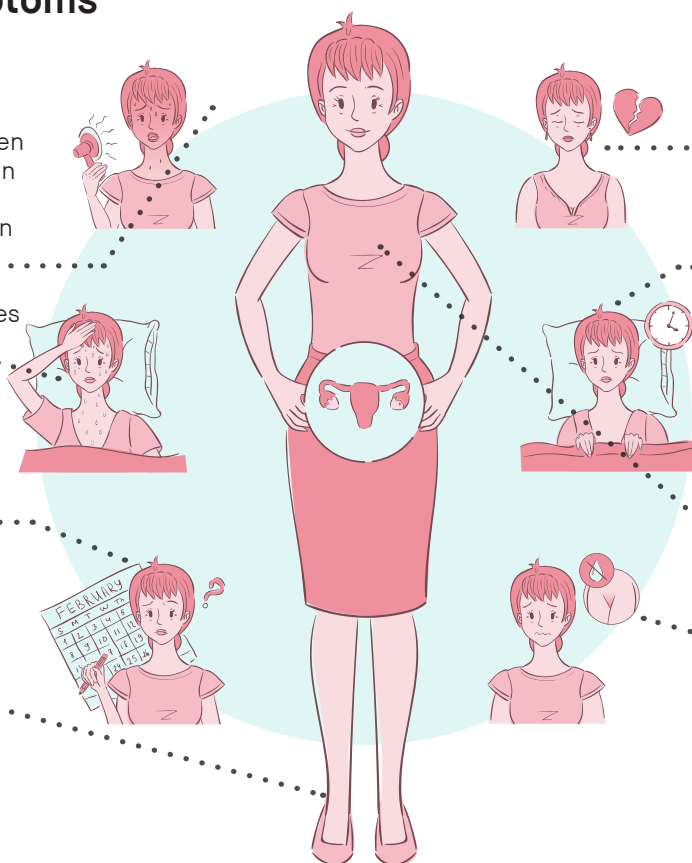
Mood changes, such as low mood, irritability or anxiety.

Headaches.

Palpitations - heartbeats that suddenly become noticeable.

Vaginal dryness and pain, itching or discomfort during sex.

Reduced muscle mass.



There are a number of prescribed interventions which may help manage symptoms, such as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Likewise, dietary and lifestyle changes may also improve menopausal symptoms. An individual's GP can offer further information and advice.



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How can symptoms **affect work?**

Remember, every woman experiences the menopause differently and the impact symptoms have on a woman at work will vary. A woman may not even recognise her symptoms as initially being caused by the menopause.

Examples of how symptoms may affect work, this is not an exhaustive list:

Hot flushes - occur unexpectedly or can be triggered by certain things. Someone experiencing a hot flush may become uncomfortable in their surroundings and need access to fresh air or something that will help cool them down. They may become conscious everyone is noticing their hot flush.

Difficulty sleeping - someone who has experienced a bad night's sleep will likely suffer the next day at work, they could be irritable, tired and have trouble undertaking their usual standard of work.

Problems with memory and concentration - being unable to remember things as normal can become increasingly frustrating and may slow down someone's productivity. Likewise, being unable to concentrate is likely to affect their work or cause delays.

Mood changes - low mood or anxiety may make performing even the simplest of tasks difficult. Mood changes could lead to a lack of confidence and problems with speaking in groups or putting themselves forward for work or promotion.

Joint stiffness, aches and pains - may make them uncomfortable at work, likewise sitting or standing for long periods of time can exacerbate this.

Irregular periods - unexpected or heavy bleeding may make a woman uncomfortable and require them to visit the toilet more often.

How can I help?

As a supervisor, you have a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of your team. The way in which the menopause is dealt with in the workplace can have a major impact on a woman's health and wellbeing.

1. Provide Emotional Support

- You should promote a team culture and management style that ensures your staff feel supported to discuss very sensitive issues with you.
- You should treat staff with respect and understanding when discussing concerns relating to the menopause, in the same way you would with other confidential medical conditions.
- Remember, every woman's experience of the menopause is different, try not to tell them what they should be experiencing but rather listen to them and ask 'how are you coping?' and 'what can I do to support you?'
- Be mindful of your team's attitude to the menopause, comments such as 'she's having another hot flush' or 'don't mind her, she's going through the change' are unhelpful and disrespectful to the woman involved.
- Symptoms such as problems with memory or concentration, low mood or anxiety may leave your staff member with a lack of confidence. Be conscious to support their work and encourage them.

How can I help?

2. Provide Practical Support

There are a number of ways you can provide practical support to someone in your team going through the menopause.

- **Reasonable adjustments** - a few small adjustments may make the experience of the menopause at work much easier. These could include access to a fan or cold drinks, adaptations to uniform, ensuring regular toilet breaks are available, adjusting workload or deadlines, quiet rest areas etc. Your force will have a risk assessment template to help you monitor any reasonable adjustments.
- **Occupational Health** - a referral to Occupational Health can provide professional advice to both you and the individual on what further steps can be taken to provide support. This includes up to date advice on reasonable adjustments, in line with the Equality Act 2010 and health and safety legislation.
- **Flexible working** - a period of flexible working may be appropriate to support the individual going through the menopause and assist them to manage their symptoms. This may include adjusting start and finish times.
- **Further advice and support** - your force menopause guide or policy should provide details of further support available. This could include staff associations, the Federation or trade unions and internal staff networks or external support groups.
- **Accurate sickness recording** - sickness absences should be recorded as an ongoing condition rather than isolated incidents.
- **Supportive processes** - treat staff going through the menopause the same way you would treat anyone with a medical condition when going through attendance or performance management procedures.



Further Learning

For further information and learning, please see the resources below:

NPCC Guidance: Management of the menopause transition in the police service 2021

NPCC Video: The Menopause

NHS Website: Menopause

The National Police Wellbeing Service: Oscar Kilo

British Menopause Society

Menopause Matters

Menopause Doctor (including details of the balance app)

Police Mutual Guidance on Menopause

ACAS Guide to Challenging Conversations



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