MENOPAUSE

TOOLKIT

Women make up 51% of the population and all women experience the Menopause. As the average age of the menopause is 51, it means symptoms often occur at the peak of a woman's career but also when other events may be happening in their life i.e. elderly parents, children leaving home.

No two women's menopause is the same. There can be a huge psychological impact and many, many physical symptoms to cope with on a daily basis.

Women react differently to hormone changes and that is why some women don't really experience symptoms and other women have such severe symptoms it affects their quality of life, work, relationships and general health.

Many symptoms can last for years, sometimes decades and to begin with many women don't realise they are in the menopause. They normalise their symptoms, putting them down to their busy life, they make excuses for them and ignore them.

Many women often feel ashamed to talk about their menopause and symptoms and people who don't experience it feel embarrassed about bringing the subject up. The more we talk about the menopause, the more it smashes the taboos and it becomes a subject we openly talk about.

Research has shown that menopausal women feel less engaged at work, have a lower level of commitment, feel less satisfied and have a greater intention to quit their job altogether the more bothersome their symptoms are. In addition, studies show that menopausal symptoms can have a significant impact on workplace attendance and performance. Menopausal symptoms can also lead to some women leaving their jobs early, or not putting themselves up for promotion.

REVISED MARCH 2025

LYNNE'S STORY

Lynne's experience of perimenopause and the impact on her life and work

My perimenopause started in my late 30s, my sisters and mother had an early menopause and this can run in families (although i didn't know this at the time). I am a Registered nurse and worked in the NHS and by this point in my career I was a lead nurse managing a team of nurses. I didn't have the classic symptoms like "hot flushes", my symptoms were more psychological i.e. low mood, irritability, lack of patience, anger and increasing lack of self confidence. I started to have days off work because I simply couldn't get up in the morning and face the day, everything was an effort. At work, I had so many lists because I couldn't remember anything. I started to dread big meetings where I had to present information and I found it really difficult communicating with my colleagues. I would hide away in my office as I felt safe in my own little space. The menopause just wasn't discussed apart from in a jokey way when other women of a similar age may mention their hot flushes! I never discussed it with the women I supervised and it was never discussed with my manager.
I struggled on for 4 years. In that time I compressed and reduced my hours to try and maintain a work /life balance. I blamed how I was feeling on my job, my manager and other things going on in my life when it was actually my menopause. I then had no choice but to go and see my GP as I thought I was going "mad". I still remember that GP appointment, 14 years ago because I just sat down and cried stating that I couldn't continue with my life as it was and that I couldn't continue at my job because I simply didn't have the confidence, energy and brain power to do it anymore. At this point, I was an Area Manager and managing a team of 30 people across both health and social care so I needed to be at my best and I just felt I was letting everyone down.

My GP was excellent in that she listened but the inevitable happened, I was given antidepressant medication and signed off work for a month. There was no conversation about my hormones or menopause, I was labelled as depressed and had to have that on my records at work. I took the medication and sick leave and then returned to work pretending that everything was fine when I actually felt desperate and alone. I pretended I felt better when actually I felt no different, worse really, because the medication made me feel flat and emotionless. I carried on for another year but then left my job after working 26 years in the NHS because I simply couldn't cope with how I felt. I told myself that my team deserved a better manager.

Menopause was never discussed with me at work because it wasn't then. Maybe if it had been openly talked about and taken seriously then I would have continued working in my job and the outcome would have been very different.

Lynne

Lynne Parkin
Associate Consultant, South East Employers

WHAT IS THE MENOPAUSE?

Menopause occurs when a woman stops having her periods. This is due to the changes in her hormones when Oestrogen and Progesterone decline in the body.

THREE STAGES OF THE MENOPAUSE:

1. **PERIMENOPAUSE**
Is the period of time with your symptoms start. This can be up to 10 years before you have your last period.

2. **MENOPAUSE**
IS when a woman hasn't had a period for 12 consecutive months. Average age is 51.

3. **POSTMENOPAUSE**
Is the time in a woman's life after her periods have stopped and it has been 12 months. Women still experiene symptoms in this period of her life.

SYMPTOMS

Three out of four women will experience symptoms of the menopause which will affect their home and work life. The severity of the symptoms depends on the woman. Sensitivity to hormones, family history and some lifestyle factors can all affect the menopause.

- ☐ Common symptoms
- ☐ Changes in periods
- ☐ Insomnia and tiredness
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Hot flushes
- ☐ Night sweats which affect quality of sleep
- ☐ Loss of confidence
- ☐ Brain for
- ☐ Lack of concentration
- ☐ Mood changes - anger, irritability
- ☐ Low mood
- ☐ Increase in anxiety
- ☐ Joint pains
- ☐ Loss of confidence
- ☐ Changes in skin and hair
- ☐ Itchy skin
- ☐ Increase in urine infections

Some women may have an early menopause for specific reasons. Under the age of 45 is classed as an early menopause and before the age of 40 it is classed as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency. 1:100 women under the age of 40 will have an early menopause. There are many reasons for this:

- ○ Surgery due to illness or disease
e.g. removal of ovaries
- ○ Medical treatments which can damage the ovaries and stop them working
e.g. chemotherapy
- ○ Early menopause can run in families
- ○ Prolonged stress/severe illness/infections
- ○ Eating disorders

MENOPAUSE STATISTICS

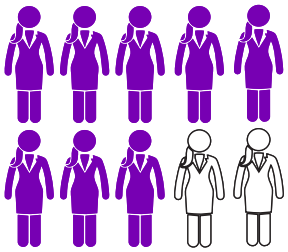
Approximately
1 IN 100
experience menopause
BEFORE 40

usually occurs **40 - 60**

UK average age is **51**
NHS

MENOPAUSAL WOMEN ARE THE FASTEST GROWING DEMOGRAPHIC IN THE WORKFORCE

PROFESSOR JO BREWIS
CO-AUTHOR GOVERNMENT REPORT ON MENOPAUSE



8 OUT OF **10** menopausal women are in work

FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

Perimenopause can occur for women from their mid-30s (or earlier)

Some trans and non-binary employees may also go through menopause due to changes in hormones (often with little support available) and employers should extend offers of support to these staff to be inclusive.

Women make up almost **70%** local government workforce

+

almost **3/4** of workforce are 40-64 years old

=

SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF WORKFORCE WILL BE EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS OF THE MENOPAUSE

There are over **30** RECOGNISED SYMPTOMS OF **MENOPAUSE**

INCLUDING...

HEART PALPITATIONS

FATIGUE

HOT FLUSHES (sometimes followed by chills)

HEADACHES

DRY EYE CONDITION

NIGHT SWEATS

MUSCULAR ACHES

SLEEP DISTURBANCE

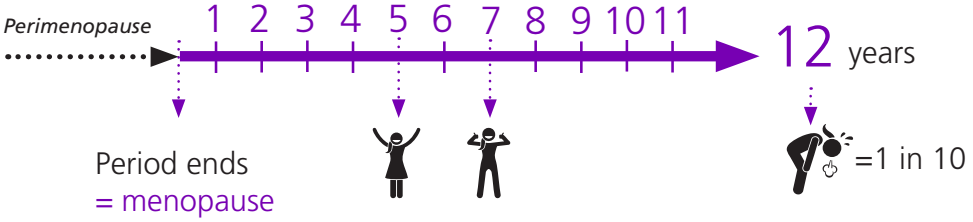
the need for MORE TOILET BREAKS, linked to recurring UTIs

POOR CONCENTRATION

IRRITABILITY, ANXIETY AND/ OR MOOD DISTURBANCES

SKIN IRRITATION

ON AVERAGE, SYMPTOMS LAST AROUND 5 - 7 YEARS FROM WHEN A WOMAN'S PERIOD ENDS...



SEE

It is vital that employers recognise menopause symptoms, have policies in place and bring the "menopause" conversation out into the open. At this point in their life women should be at the top of their careers but many are leaving their jobs or at the very least, taking jobs with less responsibility.

DID YOU KNOW?

An estimated 14 million working days a year in the UK alone are lost to menopause symptoms

IMPACT OF MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS IN THE WORKPLACE

STATISTICS FROM CIPD SURVEY 2023

73%

HAVE EXPERIENCED

symptoms related to menopause transition

OVER HALF (53%)

were able to think of a time when

THEY WERE UNABLE TO GO TO WORK

due to their menopause symptoms

67%

of working women **between ages of**

40-60

say symptoms have

NEGATIVE IMPACT

on them at work

MENOPAUSE POLICY

24%

say their organisation does have a stated menopause policy or other support

43%

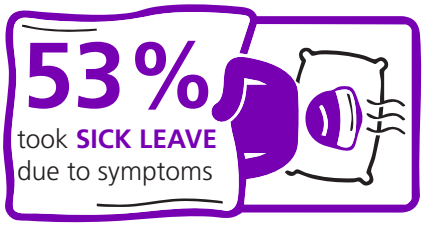
say their organisation does not have a menopause policy or other support

33%

say they don't know

1/5 OF WOMEN

said symptoms had a negative impact on career progression



6%

have actually GIVEN UP WORK

have considered **LEAVING WORK** due to **LACK OF SUPPORT** with menopause symptoms

SEE

ORGANISATIONS WITH SUPPORT ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE:

written policy

47%

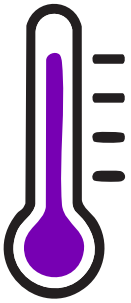
support networks

46%

FLEXIBLE WORKING

\+ ABILITY TO CONTROL TEMPERATURE

= MOST HELPFUL

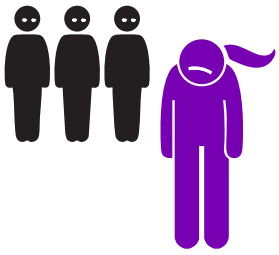


26% SAY ORGANISATIONS OFFER THIS

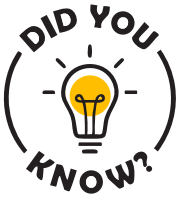
67%

feel home and hybrid working will make dealing with menopause symptoms easier

10%>



FEEL DISCRIMINATED AGAINST due to menopause symptoms



in 2025 there will be more than 1 billion people worldwide experience perimenopause/ menopause symptons

MENOPAUSAL WOMEN ARE THE

FASTEST GROWING

DEMOGRAPHIC IN THE WORKPLACE

<10%

people going through menopause speak to their line manager about symptoms

YOUR OBLIGATIONS AS AN EMPLOYER

The menopause isn't yet protected specifically under the Equality Act 2010 however age, sex and disability discrimination are protected characteristics and many menopause-related claims have been successful on these grounds.

EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2024 the Equality and Human Rights Act Commission published its first menopause in the workplace guidance. If menopause symptoms have a long term and substantial impact on someone's ability to carry out normal day to day activities, these symptoms could be considered a disability. If menopause symptoms amount to a disability, an employer will be under legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments.

HEALTH & SAFETY

As an employer, you have a duty to ensure the health and safety of all your workers and to flag up any issues/risks which may impact on them and this includes the menopause. You have a responsibility to put measures in place to minimise those risks which were identified through an assessment.

EQUALITY AT WORK

In the "Equality at Work" subsection of their manifesto, Labour announced they would make it mandatory for companies of a certain size to publish and share a personalised Menopause Action Plan, to ensure employees affected have the support they need from their employers to continue working.

Under this law, employers with 250 or more employees will be required to create, publish, and regularly refresh a report showing the steps they commit to take to ensure affected employees are fully supported.

STEPS MAY INCLUDE :

- Including accommodations such as paid leave
- Uniform adjustments
- Temperature control measures
- Flexible working arrangements
- Designated spaces for HRT treatment administration

The government has also promised to publish guidance on menopause for companies of all sizes on uniform and temperature issues, flexible working arrangements, and logging menopause-related leave and absence to help businesses build their plans.

PRACTICAL STEPS AS AN EMPLOYER

Menopause can affect women in the workplace in many different ways. Brain fog, lack of concentration and difficulty focusing can be a major issue and can severely affect a person's quality of work as they can't remember things. Lack of sleep and some physical symptoms i.e. hot flushes, itchy skin and joint pain can be pretty miserable and debilitating.

Women need support, understanding and signposting to resources as well as being able to talk openly and freely about how they are feeling and what they are experiencing. Education is key because women who are prepared to learn about the menopause and embrace it are far more likely to have a positive emotional response to their symptoms.

1. The first and most important point for improving menopause in the workplace is to bring the "conversation about menopause" out into the open. To create a proactive culture where women can talk "openly" about their concerns, symptoms, treatment with colleagues and managers. The word "menopause" becomes part of everyday conversation with everyone in the workforce. This also needs to come top down from senior leadership as everyone needs to engage.

2. The language of the menopause used in the workplace needs to be simple and easy to understand so everyone gets used to hearing the words. We need to normalise it in the workplace to reduce fear and stigma. This has successfully happened with pregnancy and mental health.

3. A menopause policy should be put in place which is accessible and user friendly for staff. It needs to contain information on how staff can access information and support. Staff need to know they can ask for assessments so adjustments may be made at work.

4. Menopause Awareness Training should be available for all managers on how to support staff who are going through the menopause, how to bring the conversation up in 1:1 supervision sessions and to know what resources are available to staff which may help them.

5. Access to menopause specialist advice/ support for staff to discuss their personal experiences and how to get further advice/ treatment.

6. To put in place peer support systems. This could involve trained "menopause champions" in the workplace, mentors for those experiencing symptoms and menopause support groups/cafes or training existing Health and Wellbeing champions so they are confident in offering support.

7. Be open to any reasonable adjustments for staff - flexible work schedules/ arrangements, adapting the work environment especially for temperature as this can be a major problem for some women. Wearing more comfortable clothes again for temperature control but also for other physical symptoms that can occur

RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND TO STAFF

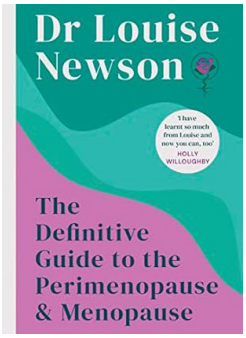
THE BALANCE APP
balanceapp.com

This is an App for your phone which has been developed by Dr Louise Newson. She is a menopause specialist and has her own websites and podcasts dedicated to the menopause.

BRITISH MENOPAUSE SOCIETY
thebms.org.uk/

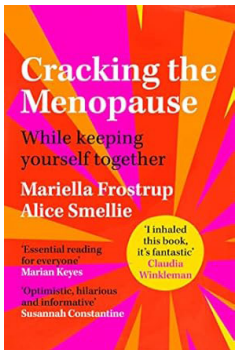
Good website to update on the latest menopause news, changes in law and treatments.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS TO READ



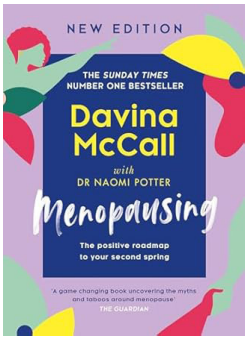
The definitive guide to the perimenopause and menopause

Dr Louise Newson



Cracking the menopause: Whilst keeping yourself together

Mariella Frostrup / Alice Smellie



Menopausing: The positive Roadmap to your second Spring

Davina McCall

HOW CAN SEE SUPPORT YOU?

TRAINING

SEE can offer training courses in order to support managers and Health and Wellbeing / Menopause champions in supporting women in the workplace who are going through the menopause

NETWORKS

Both our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks and Health and Wellbeing networks meet bi-monthly and offer the opportunity for knowledge sharing and discussion

ONE-TO-ONE COACHING SUPPORT

SEE are able to offer one to one coaching support to women who are struggling in the workplace due to the menopause Policies – SEE are able to assist with you with putting policies in place around supporting women who are going through the menopause

POLICIES

SEE are able to assist with you with putting policies in place around supporting women who are going through the menopause

If you would like more information, please contact info@seemp.co.uk

REFERENCES

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www.healthywomen.com
www.britishmenopausesociety.com