



Menopause and the workplace

#Menopause



Symptoms

- **Hot flushes** which can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downwards.
- **Sleep disturbance** can be caused by the night sweats, although it can also be caused by the anxiety women feel during the menopause.
- **Urinary problems** may also occur during the menopause, and many women have recurrent lower urinary tract infections, such as cystitis.
- **Heavy periods** and clots are common during the menopause and some periods may last longer.
- **Vaginal symptoms** such as vaginal dryness, itching or discomfort are common.

Women's experience at work

Research shows that:

- Many women found they were little prepared for the arrival of the menopause, and even less equipped to manage its symptoms at work. Over half had not disclosed their symptoms to their manager.
- The majority of women felt they needed further advice and support.
- Workplaces and working practices are not designed with menopausal women in mind.
- Some women said they worked extremely hard to overcome their perceived shortcomings.
- Heavy and painful periods, hot flushes, mood disturbance, fatigue, and poor concentration posed significant and embarrassing problems for some women, leaving them feeling less confident.
- Women are not comfortable disclosing their difficulties to their managers, particularly if those managers are younger than them or are male.
- Where women had taken time off work to deal with their symptoms, only half of them disclosed the real reason for absence to their line managers.
- Others considered working part-time, although they were concerned about the impact on their career if they did so, or had even thought about leaving the labour force altogether.
- Over half of the sample reported they were not able to negotiate flexible working hours or working practices as much as they needed to in order to deal with their symptoms.
- Over half the women felt that it would be useful to have information or advice from their employer regarding the menopause and how to cope with their work.
- Temperature in the workplace appeared to be an issue for many women. Nearly half the sample reported not having temperature control in their usual working environment. Some could not open windows, or experienced interpersonal difficulties doing so in shared workspaces.

Treatment Options

- There are a number of different types of **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)** that can be prescribed for women. HRT is known to be the most effective treatment for women suffering with symptoms of the menopause.
- **Alternative medications** such as anti-depressants or other medications can be given sometimes to help ease some of the symptoms such as depression, headaches.
- There are a number of **natural treatments** and products available in chemists, supermarkets, pharmacies'.
- Making simple **dietary and lifestyle** changes can often improve menopausal symptoms. For example, eating a healthy, balanced diet and taking plenty of regular exercise can help avoid putting on extra weight. Self-help alternatives such as strategies for managing stress, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, going for a short walk whilst at work may also help.

Further Information and Support

Speaking with your manager about any support and adjustments you feel you need is the first step to getting the support you need.

There is information available at:

NHS website - menopause guidance

nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/

Menopause matters

menopausematters.co.uk/menopause.php

NICE guidance

nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23

Women's health concern website - healthy menopause

womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/healthy-menopause/

Henpicked

henpicked.net/menopause-hub/

Balance App

This is now available to download at balance-menopause.com

The Council has a Menopause Network.

If you would like to find out more please email staffnetworkgroups@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

