



University of
St Andrews

Menopause guidance

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1. Statement

- 1.1 The University is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here. This guidance has been designed to support employees in the University who are experiencing difficulties in their work and/or personal life brought on and/or exacerbated by menopause related symptoms.
- 1.2 The menopause could be a natural stage of life for many and usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, although some can experience this earlier or later in life. Whilst it is acknowledged that not everyone will experience menopausal symptoms, supporting those that do will improve their experience at work. Definitions of the menopausal stages are outlined in [Appendix A](#).

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This guidance aims to:
- Raise awareness of the symptoms which are widely linked to the menopause;
 - Normalise the conversation about the menopause and improve the level of support and information provided;
 - Provide line managers with guidance in managing employees experiencing menopausal symptoms.
- 2.2 This guidance is compliant with ACAS guidance on [Menopause at work](#) and guidance provided by [Faculty of Occupational Medicine \(FOM\)](#).

3. Scope

- 3.1 This guidance applies to all employees of the University.
- 3.2 The guidance refers to employees experiencing menopause related symptoms. Please note that experiences and perceptions of the menopause may differ in relation to age, disability, race, religion or sexual orientation protected characteristics.

4. Symptoms

- 4.1 Symptoms can differ widely in terms of type and severity; some can experience only mild discomfort from menopausal changes whereas others are impacted significantly by their symptoms. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not limited to vasomotor symptoms (for example hot flushes and night sweats), musculoskeletal symptoms (for example, joint and muscle pain), and mood disturbances (for example low mood, anxiety, panic attacks and mood swings). Other common symptoms include, although not limited to, sleep disturbances, fatigue, exhaustion, irregular periods and poor concentration/memory, all of which, if the employee does not seek the support they need from the workplace, it is increasingly likely that the effects of menopause may lead to the employee feeling ill or losing confidence to do their job.
- 4.2 Symptoms on average last about four years from the last period, however some cases can last longer, up to twelve years. Even though a high proportion of employees will experience menopausal symptoms in the workplace, these concerns tend rarely to be discussed at work. [Section 6](#) provides pointers for employees to help with these discussions. The [NHS website](#) provides an overview of the menopause including a list of common menopausal

symptoms (some of which are mentioned in 4.1) and recommended treatment which can be accessed for further detailed information.

5. Early menopause

5.1 As many as one in twenty individuals may go through early menopause. It may happen for various reasons, including if the person has had certain medical conditions and health treatment. Line managers need to be aware that medically this can be a complicated area and should take this into account when supporting an employee through the menopause. More information about early menopause can be read at the [NHS website](#) and/or charity the [Daisy Network](#).

6. Guidance for employees

6.1 Employee responsibilities

6.1.1 All employees are responsible for:

- taking personal accountability to look after their health and wellbeing;
- familiarising themselves with the guidance and information provided;
- requesting support from their line manager (either directly or via a third party) and keeping them informed of any changes to their health that impacts on their workplace duties and responsibilities;
- complying with all the University policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity, ensuring that individuals are treated with respect and dignity and are not subjected to ageist or sexist comments when experiencing symptoms of the menopause;
- contributing to a respectful and productive working environment.

6.2 GP support

6.2.1 If an employee is experiencing menopausal symptoms that are having an adverse impact on their personal and/or working life, it is recommended that they talk with their GP, in the first instance as they will provide advice on available treatment options and recommended work adjustments.

6.3 Talking menopause at work

6.3.1 Currently, many employees do not disclose their menopausal symptoms at work and many take time-off work because of the menopause but do not tell their employer of the real reason for their absence. The reasons for this are widely due to the fact the employee feels that:

- their symptoms are personal/private;
- the symptoms are embarrassing, or they would find it uncomfortable to disclose the reason with their manager;
- they don't know their manager well enough;
- they don't feel comfortable disclosing it to their male or younger manager.

6.3.2 If the employee feels that they cannot talk directly to their line manager regarding a matter relating to the menopause, then they can request to discuss the issue with another line manager of the same sex, a member of the Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) team, the University's Occupational Health practitioner or a suitable alternative person for

example, a trade union representative who will, in turn cascade any relevant information to the appropriate line manager as agreed with the employee.

6.3.3 The employee should:

- consider the symptoms that they are experiencing and how they feel they are affecting performance at work;
- think about what adjustments/changes to the role would help alleviate the symptoms and how they feel these can be implemented within their role (including any recommended GP advice);
- provide some real-life scenarios they are facing to help the line manager understand how it is affecting work for example, the employee is experiencing night sweats which is preventing them from sleeping and therefore they are tired at work making it difficult to concentrate.

7. Guidance for line managers

7.1 Line manager responsibilities

7.1.1 In addition to the employee responsibilities, all line managers are responsible for:

- raising awareness among all staff that the University will handle menopause in the workplace sensitively, and with dignity and respect;
- the health and safety for their employees and requesting a [risk assessment](#) is undertaken for any employee they regard as a concern/risk;
- supporting staff experiencing menopausal symptoms in the same way as an employee with any ongoing health complaint;
- treating any conversation with employees sensitively and professionally;
- documenting key meeting points including any adjustments agreed with the employee;
- ensuring ongoing dialogue and review dates with the employee;
- ensuring that all agreed work-place adjustments are adhered to;
- liaising with their HRBP with reference to [7.4.4](#).

7.2 Risk assessments

7.2.1 Employers have a legal duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace risks to the health and safety of their employees. (The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974). Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of the person and ensure that the working environment or working practices will not exacerbate their symptoms. If a line manager considers that there is a concern for the health and safety of an employee, they should contact [Occupational Health](#) for guidance and support.

7.3 Workplace adjustments

7.3.1 Small changes to the employee's role or workplace can make a huge difference to the quality of working life for employees experiencing the menopause. When support is adequately provided, it can prevent or reduce levels of sickness absence, productivity dips and turnover and instead, increase wellbeing, engagement levels and loyalty.

7.3.2 Some conditions arising from the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act (2010). Such conditions which meet this definition would be considered a disability and therefore line managers must ensure consideration is taken to implement adjustments where requested. The aim is for the line manager to understand

the barriers the employee is experiencing and jointly with the employee consider solutions to improve or resolve the concern.

7.3.3 Regarding the perimenopause and menopause, an assessment should, for example include:

- Review control of workplace temperature and ventilation. This might include having a desktop fan in an office, or locating a workstation near an opening window or away from a heat source;
- Consider flexible working hours or shift changes for instance if sleep is disturbed, later start times, (if suitable depending on the nature of the role) might be helpful or flexible breaks if the employee requires time away from their desk to overcome a hot flush;
- Permitting time off for medical appointments;
- Provide access to cold drinking water;
- Ensure access to wash room facilities and toilets including when travelling or working in temporary locations;
- Where uniforms are compulsory, flexibility is helpful for example this might include being allowed to remove jackets, wear a hair net instead of a hat or request an extra uniform in cases of excessive sweating;
- Where work requires constant standing or prolonged sitting, having access to a rest room/area to sit during work breaks or for employees to go if they are experiencing a hot flush.

7.3.4 Other adjustments that are not listed above will also be considered if deemed reasonable and necessary to alleviate symptoms.

7.4 Supporting menopause at work

7.4.1 According to ACAS, one in three will experience severe menopausal symptoms and one in four will experience mild menopausal symptoms. The University recognises that everyone is different, and it is therefore not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines to follow in these circumstances. If in doubt, please speak to an [HR Business Partner](#).

7.4.2 Line managers must leave it to the employee to raise any concerns. A line manager can ask general questions however they must not directly ask them if they want to talk about the menopause or perimenopause or suggest that they might be experiencing symptoms. If an employee requests to meet with their line manager (or equivalent) about how they are feeling, as a line manager, they should:

- have the discussion at the earliest possibility. This meeting must not be cancelled or rearranged if it can be avoided;
- allow adequate time for the discussion to occur; be aware that the employee may feel embarrassed or be noticeably upset and so it may take some time for them to talk openly;
- ask open-ended questions to allow the employee to speak freely about their concerns such as; what are the symptoms you are experiencing? How do they manifest themselves in the workplace? What adjustments do you suggest to alleviate these symptoms?
- explore whether they have attended their GP and if not, recommend the employee takes some professional medical advice via their GP. The line manager can also refer the employee to [Occupational Health \(OH\)](#). Advice can be sought from OH at any time by either party prior to making any workplace adjustments if guidance and medical assistance is required;

- consider if a [risk assessment](#) is needed;
- be clear on what the employee is requesting. It is always best to summarise the meeting before it ends to ensure both parties agree and follow this up in writing with the employee;
- agree actions and how to implement them including setting time to review how the arrangement is working in practice once implemented (and follow this up in writing e.g. by email);
- agree if other employees should/are required to be informed of the adjustments and by who.

7.4.3 Additional guidance to support line managers in dealing with employees experiencing menopausal symptoms can be sourced in [Appendix B](#). Line managers are also encouraged to read the guidance produced from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) "[A practical guide for people managers](#)".

7.4.4 **Please note:** If the adjustments that are requested by the employee or proposed by the line manager impact on terms and conditions of employment; for example, reduced hours and shift changes that will have an impact on pay, change of location/role responsibilities, the line manager **must** speak to their [HR Business Partner](#) before agreeing to any change of terms. This is to ensure that the correct procedure and documentation is completed, and that the employee is fully aware of the financial or contractual impact of the change.

7.4.5 Where adjustments implemented are unsuccessful or if symptoms become more severe/problematic, the line manager should consider referring the employee to [OH](#) to seek advice and recommendations.

8. Training

8.1 Employees, including line managers can attend the University's menopause workshop, "*Let's Talk Menopause*" for further information on the menopause. Another recommended workshop is, "*Love Later Life*". These courses can be booked through the University's online [Personal Development Management System \(PDMS\)](#).

9. Support

9.1 [Appendix B](#) provides a list of internal and external support pathways available to employees.

10. Online resources

10.1 This section lists all the internal and external webpages that has been referred to in this document.

ACAS	https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause
Faculty of Occupational Medicine	https://www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-for-employers/dealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause
NHS	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms/
Daisy Network	https://www.daisynetwork.org/
HR Business Partner contacts	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/businesspartner/

OH contact	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ehss/occupationalhealth/
CIPD “Menopause guide for people managers”	https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/menopause-guide-for-people-managers_tcm18-55548.pdf
PDMS	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/pdms/

11. Version control

- 10.1 This document will be reviewed regularly. Any feedback on the guidance content should be directed in the first instance to the [HRBP team](#), who will consider this as part of the review.

Version Number	Purpose / Changes	Document Status	Author, role and School / Unit	Date
1.0	New guidance	In draft	Lisa Stewart HR	12/12/2019
1.1	Update to front cover to confirm EIA completion date.	Published	Lisa Stewart HR	02/04/2021

This document is not contractual and may be amended by the University from time to time.

Appendix A: Definitions

Source definition: Chartered Institute of Personnel Development: *The menopause at work*

Menopause stages	Definition
Perimenopause	The perimenopause refers to the phase leading up to the menopause, when the hormone balance starts to change. The perimenopause usually starts in the mid-forties but can start earlier or later and last several years.
Menopause	Menopause is when a woman's oestrogen levels decline, and she stops having periods. It is a biological stage that marks the end of a woman's reproductive life.
Post menopause	Post menopause refers to the stage after the menopause, when a woman has not had a period for at least 12 consecutive months.
Premature menopause	Occurs when women experience menopausal symptoms before 40 years of age (also known as premature ovarian failure or premature ovarian insufficiency). It can occur naturally or as a result of medical or surgical treatment.

Appendix B: Support

Recommended internal support contact details

Name of Department	Contact details	Service provided
Chaplaincy	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/chaplaincy/ chaplaincy@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 462866 or 462492	Offers pastoral care and support for any employee, regardless of faith or philosophy of life. This could be a sympathetic, confidential listening ear, support in emotional issues, a safe place to explore questions of faith or sexuality, someone to talk to in a crisis, or support when all else fails.
Equality and Diversity	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/edi/ diversity@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 461649	Provides a confidential service of advice to members of the University community (staff, students, visitors) on any aspect of ED&I. The Head of ED&I is Sukhi Bains.
Human Resources	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/ humres@st-andrews.ac.uk (general email enquiries) 01334 463096	Provides support to employees of University of St Andrews. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Monday –Friday; 09:00am to 17.00pm • HR web and policy page • Dedicated HR Business Partner team for each School and Unit
Occupational Health	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ehss/occupationalhealth/ 01334 462750 or 01334 462752 occhealth@st-andrews.ac.uk	Employees can refer themselves to OH for confidential health advice at any time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one consultation/appointments • Expert support and advice provided • Recommended adjustments to support the employee • Partnership with external health practitioners i.e. counselling services and CBT.
Student Services	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/student-services/ theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk 01334 462020	Employees can contact Student Services for any student related guidance, support or advice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Monday to Friday; 09:30am to 16:30pm • Student Services bespoke web page
Trade Union Representatives	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/community/support/tradeunionrepresentatives/	Trade union representatives are trained to deal and support employees with any workplace related matters of concern.

Recommended external support contact details

Name of Organisation	Contact details	Service provided
British Menopause Society (BMS)	https://thebms.org.uk/	Provides information and guidance to healthcare professionals specialising in all aspects of post reproductive health.
Daisy Network	https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk/	Support for premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.
Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians	http://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf	Provides guidance on menopause and the workplace. Aimed at people going through the menopause and experiencing the impact it has on their working lives.
Megs Menopause	https://megsmenopause.com/	An open source of information and advice dedicated to empowering people through an honest and frank discussion of all thing's menopause.
Menopause Cafe	https://www.menopausecafe.net/	Gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause.
Menopause Matters	https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/	Provides up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.
Menopause Support	https://menopausesupport.co.uk/	Provides private consultation to take control of menopausal symptoms; Option to join a private menopause support network; Offers guidance and useful and practical advice on managing the menopause.
My Menopause Doctor	https://www.menopausedoctor.co.uk/	
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines	https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/resources/menopause-diagnosis-and-management-pdf-1837330217413	Provides guidelines and advice on the care and support that should be offered to people who use health and care services.
NHS	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/	Provides an overview of the menopause including typical symptoms and available treatments offered to aid the condition.
The Menopause Exchange	http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/	Provides independent advice about the menopause, midlife and post-menopausal health. Free quarterly newsletter with useful impartial help and support.
Woman's Health Concern	https://www.womens-health-concern.org/	WHC is the patient arm of the BMS. Independent service to advise, reassure and educate people of all ages about their gynaecological and sexual health, wellbeing and lifestyle concerns.

