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# Menopause in the Workplace Line Manager Support Guide



Everyone's experience of menopause is different. We experience different symptoms, have different views or philosophies around how we'd manage them and different medical histories too.

**This workbook provides knowledge and understanding around menopause and where to signpost support and help.**

Throughout this pack, we sometimes use the terms 'women', 'female' and 'her'. However, we recognise that people from different communities can also experience menopause or symptoms as a result of hormonal changes.

# How do we support menopause at work?



Your role as a line manager in supporting those experiencing menopause symptoms is crucial. Offering support to colleagues with menopausal symptoms that are impacting on their work will help you to improve your team's morale, retain valuable skills and talent, and reduce sickness absence.

In this guide we will cover:

- The four compelling reasons why employers should be supporting menopause in the workplace:
  - Demographic case
  - Business case
  - Legal case
  - Social responsibility case
- Key menopause facts all line managers should be aware of
- Managing menopause - signposting our 3-stage process
- How to have a supportive conversation
- Useful resources

# Four compelling reasons

## The demographic case

Many women in mid and later life are returning to work or staying in work longer. In fact, women aged 50-64 have been the fastest-growing demographic in the workplace in the UK for decades. Looking at January-March 2020 compared with the same time period in 1993, their labour market participation had increased by 21.2 percentage points. This is compared with a rise of 12.2 percentage points for men in the same time period. So this is a big demographic at work.

The average age for women to reach menopause in the UK is

**51 years**



Around **75-80%** of women of menopausal age are in work



By 2020 it is estimated that

**1 in 3 British workers**

will be over the age of 50



## The business case

There are many associated costs of losing an employee who chooses to leave due to debilitating symptoms. Assuming they earning £25k - which is lower than the UK average - their departure will cost the organisation over £30,500. As well as recruitment costs, organisations are also losing a colleague with knowledge and experience, which will take time for their replacement to get up to speed with.

# 4 compelling reasons

## The legal case



The most relevant legislation covering menopause is the Equality Act 2010, which has been the basis of three successful tribunals. The protected characteristics relevant to menopause are age, sex and disability. We have also had health and safety at work legislation since 1974. This puts a duty of care on employers, and failing to look after menopausal women could be argued as breach of this law. Another good reason to follow best practice in how you support menopausal women in the workplace.

## The social responsibility case

Because it's the right thing to do. Statistics from ITV and the Wellbeing of Women tell us that 25% of women surveyed said they'd considered quitting work, and half said work made their symptoms worse. That's an awful lot of women going through a miserable time. There is strong evidence that work is a great provider of social support and a source of self esteem. Normalising menopause at work and making it unremarkable is the right thing to do. A key comparator is women who are pregnant or have children, which is an ordinary workplace conversation. There is growing evidence that normalising menopause in conversation pays dividends. Women who feel supported are happier and more committed and satisfied. This is hard to tangibly measure, but is in evidence in a lot of data.



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Menopausal women are the  
fastest-growing workforce  
demographic in the UK

# What is the menopause?

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when her hormones change and eventually menstruation stops. Usually it is defined as having occurred when they've not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally).

The average menopause age is 51, however it can be earlier naturally or due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

**Perimenopause** is the time leading up to menopause when they may experience changes and menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

**Postmenopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months and for the rest of her life. When we talk about menopause in this guidance, we are referring to any of these stages.

## What are the symptoms of menopause?

Hormonal changes can result in a wide range of symptoms, both physical and psychological. In research, the ones women have said affect them most at work include:

- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia or fatigue
- Hot flushes during the day or night
- Low mood, depression or changes in mood
- Nervousness, worry or anxiety
- Reduced ability to concentrate or focus
- Problems with memory recall
- Migraines or headaches
- Aches and pains
- Irregular and/or heavy periods
- Urinary issues, e.g. increased frequency

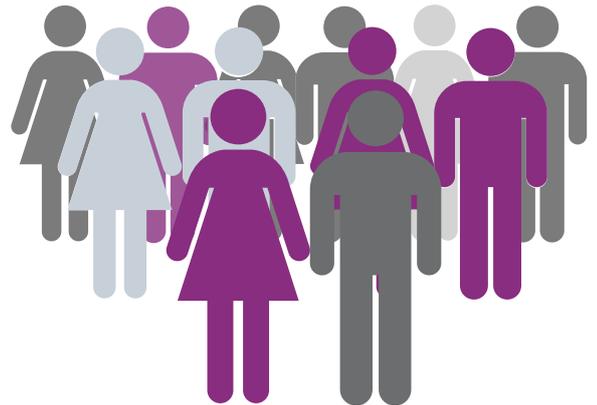
## Thinking about long-term health, too

Understanding menopause is more than just being aware of symptoms, it's about long-term health, too. As hormone levels change, we need to take extra care about our wellbeing, in particular heart and bone health.

# Menopause: the facts

More than **3 out of 4** women experience menopause symptoms at some time.

But menopause isn't something just women need to know about - men should be aware too, so they can support colleagues, friends and family.



## Did you know?

**51** is the average age women reach menopause

**1 in 4** women experience serious symptoms

**2 in 5** women said their menopause symptoms had been worse than they had expected

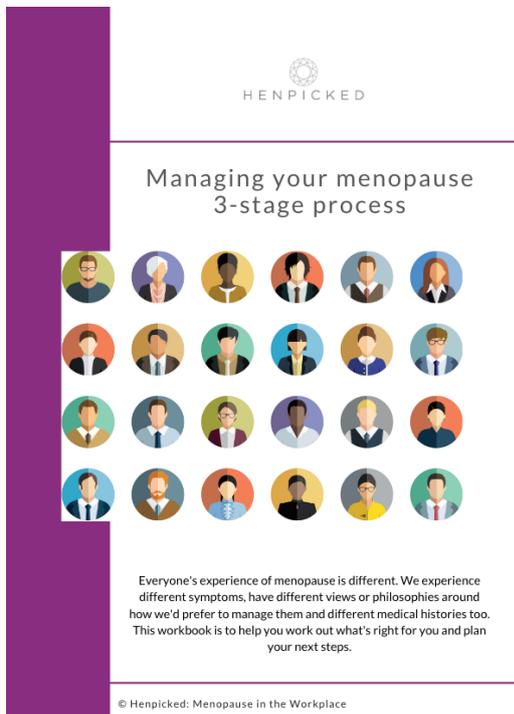
**8 in 10** women of menopausal age are in work

**1 in 100** women reach menopause before the age of 40

**The majority of women** are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to their line managers.

# Managing Your Menopause 3-Stage Process

Managing Your Menopause (3-stage process) helps those experiencing menopause understand how they can manage their menopause. Everyone's experience of menopause is different. Everyone experiences different symptoms, has different views or philosophies around how they'd prefer to manage them and different medical histories too. This workbook is to help anyone experiencing menopause symptoms work out what's right for them, and plan their next steps. As a line manager, this can be a useful tool to signpost:



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## Managing your menopause 3-stage process



Everyone's experience of menopause is different. We experience different symptoms, have different views or philosophies around how we'd prefer to manage them and different medical histories too. This workbook is to help you work out what's right for you and plan your next steps.

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<b>SYMPTOMS</b>				
0 = NO PROBLEM   1 = MILD SYMPTOMS   2 = SEVERE SYMPTOMS 3 = EXTREMELY SEVERE SYMPTOMS				
	0	1	2	3
<b>PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS</b>				
Hot flushes/Night sweats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sleep problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skin (dryness, itching or acne)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aching joints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weight gain or bloating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fatigue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heart palpitations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changes in periods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breast tenderness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UTI, urinary frequency & leakage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS</b>				
Worry or anxiety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lower self confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mood swings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Memory problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Low mood or depression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Panic attacks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easily tearful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decreased ability to concentrate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brain fog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inability to multi task	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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# How to have a supportive conversation about menopause

Research tells us that people can find it hard to talk to their manager about how menopause is affecting them. However, your role as manager is to help your team be their best at work. Preparation will help you both. This will result in a much better conversation and outcome for both you and your colleague.

**Prepare for your meeting.** Check out what support is available in your organisation. Search your organisation's intranet or if there's nothing there, talk to HR.

**Book a meeting.** Arrange a time to meet, allowing enough time for the conversation. Think about where you are meeting, finding a room which will allow the conversation to be confidential.

**Encourage them to speak openly and honestly.** Understand how menopause is affecting them at work, what they're doing to manage their menopause and what you as their line manager could do to help. Discuss what the support they would like e.g. reasonable adjustments and timescales. Or sometimes just knowing someone understands and is there to listen can help.

Agree with your colleague what you can both do. If you need to, take time to find out information and seek advice.

**Do they want the conversation to be confidential?** Some of us are happy talking about menopause openly, others are not. Talk to your colleague about whether you want the conversation to be kept confidential or if they're happy to discuss it with colleagues. It's their choice.

**Follow up.** At the end of the meeting put a time in the diary to meet again, whether that's to agree a way forward, to monitor progress or update. Menopause symptoms can change over time.

Above all, it's in both your best interests to find a good solution. All anyone wants is for your team to be fit and well to enable them to do their job to the best of their ability.

# Do's and Don'ts



## Line Managers

### What you should do

- Know your facts
- Talk about menopause
- Follow your process
- Keep an open mind and be flexible
- Provide support and focus on the solution
- Refer to HR and OH, if needed

### What you shouldn't do

- Make assumptions
- Shy away from talking about menopause
- Share personal information without consent
- Address performance without checking health issues

**Don't give medical advice but do suggest relevant support**

## Useful resources



### General menopause information:

[Nice Guidelines](#)

[British Menopause Society](#)

[Women's Health Concern](#)

[Henpicked - Menopause Hub](#)

### Line Managers

The compelling reasons: <https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk/menopause-at-work/menopause-and-work-its-important/>

Menopause tribunals and employment law

<https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk/articles/menopause-tribunals-is-your-organisation-at-risk/>

CIPD podcast in which our founder Deborah Garlick talks about why taking menopause in the workplace seriously is so important <https://www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/menopause>

Research from King's College about what women want

<https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk/menopause-at-work/what-do-working-menopausal-women-want/>

Government Report on Effects of Menopause Transition

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/menopause-transition-effects-on-womens-economic-participation>

## Useful resources continued

### Guidance:

- How to have a good conversation with a GP: top tips: <https://henpicked.net/how-to-talk-to-your-gp-about-menopause/>
- National Institute of Medicinal Herbalists <https://www.nimh.org.uk/find-a-herbalist/>
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/cognitive-behaviour-therapy-cbt-menopausal-symptoms/>
- Information on hysterectomy: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/hysterectomy/>
- Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI): <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>
- Complementary/alternative therapies: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/complementaryalternative-therapies-menopausal-women/>

### Infographics:

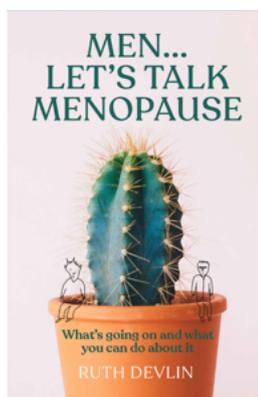
- [HRT Myths Uncovered - Primary Care Women's Health Forum](#)
- [British Menopause Society Menopause Infographic](#)
- [Understanding the Risks of Breast Cancer - Women's Health Concern Infographic](#)
- [HRT and Breast Cancer - Peppy Health](#)
- [British Menopause Society Survey Results Infographic](#)
- [Know your menopause poster](#)

### Books we recommend:

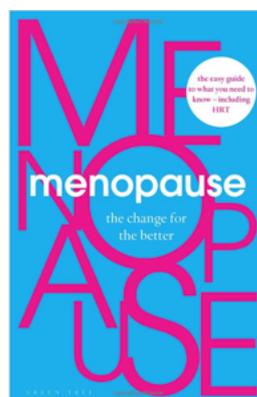
[Menopause - the change for the better - Henpicked](#)

[Men... Let's Talk Menopause - Ruth Devlin](#)

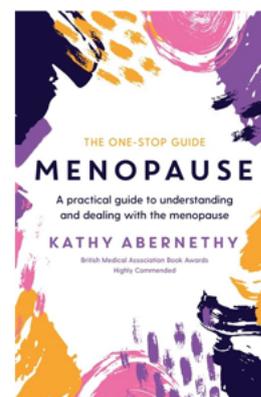
[The one stop guide to menopause - Kathy Abernethy](#)



Men... Let's talk menopause  
by Ruth Devlin



Menopause: the change  
for the better  
by Henpicked



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