



Pause and Flow

By the time they reach menopause, the average person that menstruates has had around 480 periods over 40(ish) years. But why is it that menstruation can still be seen as shameful or embarrassing, and menopause is often treated as invisible? At Sussex we want to break through the silence, with resources, advice, information and workshops, whilst providing safe environments to have confidential chats.

Whether you need guidance, advice or simply a sense of community you've come to the right place. Please read on to hear more about Thriving through Menopause and the Period Dignity Project and also to celebrate the milestones and progress we've made so far in raising awareness and overcoming stigmas.

We're in this together - through every pause and flow.

Menopause

Helen Tomlinson, the Government's Menopause Champion has set up the **UK Menopause Taskforce** - 'no time to step back' - a multilateral forum made up of the UK government and Devolved Administrations to strengthen coordination and raise awareness of menopause and its impact across the UK. Helen published her [12 point plan progress report](#) on 8 March. She says

"...Having built a network of menopause-friendly employers and strategic partnerships, I will use these to enhance the delivery of this work. In particular, I will focus next on exploring sector-specific allyship, ensuring that no one affected by menopause is isolated, and everyone has someone to talk to."



Lisette Whittaker, Sussex's Menopause Workplace Trainer, attended the taskforce's first in person event on 29 February and will be incorporating some of the best practice shared at Sussex. Look out for more information!



The government has also announced [£25 million for women's health hub expansion - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) pledging that women across England will benefit from tailored healthcare and

support by new women's health hubs - improving access and quality of care for services for menstrual problems, contraception, pelvic pain, menopause care and more.

There are lots of resources on our [Thriving through Menopause](#) staff pages, offering support for anyone experiencing symptoms but also for anyone wanting to support colleagues, friends or loved ones. Helpful resources include:

- a downloadable symptom tracker
- how to have an effective GP/healthcare appointment
- link to the Menopause policy and supporting guidance
- what to do if your symptoms are affecting you at work and much more

We also offer Menopause workshops for line managers and one for all staff, we facilitate regular in person and online Menopause cafés, we have an active menopause online peer support group via Teams, which provide a safe, inclusive space for all. Anyone wishing to join can contact L.Whittaker@sussex.ac.uk or W.Carey@sussex.ac.uk

Notable actions and celebrations for 2023/24

- **15** line managers attended the Menopause Awareness for Managers workshop, equipping them to champion supportive environments for colleagues navigating this transition
- **46** staff members have joined us for our Raising Awareness of the Menopause for all staff training, fostering an inclusive culture of understanding and open dialogue
- We've held a writing meditation workshop on menopause by *Maggie Winters*
- Flower of Life nutrition have held a webinar for all staff on *How to support the body through Perimenopause and Menopause*
- We've held three menopause cafés
- Curated and conducted a menopause survey which is helping to inform our future plans
- Had drop in tables at Learning at Work week, our PS Celebration event and at welcome sessions for new staff
- Fed into PS Places review to request needs of menopausal and menstrual staff are taken into consideration when designing office spaces
- Written a report which is due to be published later in the year
- The menopause MS team chat has grown in numbers and we now have over 100 PS and academic colleagues who use this safe space to talk and share with their colleagues. This chat has inspired a menstruation chat group too
- Lisette Whittaker, Sussex's Menopause Workplace Trainer received an award from [The Staff Development Forum](#) for her work in this space, she's also been asked to join the government's Menopause Taskforce and is currently supporting another university to grow its menopause support offer!

We have had some great feedback about our workshops and support:

“Didn't think there was much more I could learn about the menopause, turns out I was wrong! Really good session, very informative, very helpful and lots of practical tips to take away.”

“I decided to attend when the invite clearly demonstrated that men were welcome to understand more and I felt included by Lisette and the wider group. I learned a lot in the session and I was particularly impressed by her willingness to share her own perspective and encouraged us men to ask questions which is hard to do on this subject.”

“The support at Sussex has helped me understand my symptoms and realise that it's not just me. It has given me courage to speak about menopause and menopause symptoms with colleagues”.

More workshops and cafés are scheduled for the Summer term:

- **Menopause Awareness for Managers workshop** is being held on **Wednesday 5 June** from 11.30 am to 1.00 pm in the Meeting House. We strongly encourage managers of all genders to join this enlightening session. You'll gain insights into menopause symptoms and learn strategies to help create a supportive work environment. This is a great opportunity to enhance your management skills and show your commitment to inclusivity and employee wellbeing. Book via [LearnUpon](#).
- **Raising Awareness of the Menopause for all staff** will be on **Thursday 4 July** from 10.30 am to 12.00 pm in the Meeting House. All genders are welcome to join this session and find out more about menopause symptoms and how to access resources and support. Book via [LearnUpon](#)
- The next **Menopause Café** will be on **Wednesday 8 May** from 12.00 to 1.00 pm in the Meeting House. [Book on Eventbrite](#)
- During **Learning at Work Week** on Monday 13 May we'll be arranging a drop-in session for all staff to find out more about menstruation and menopause. More details coming soon.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHCR)

The (EHCR) published their first [Guidance on Menopause in the Workplace](#) on 22 February 2024. In the guidance you will find some helpful explainer videos on:

- Menopause and the Equality Act 2010

- Making Workplace Adjustments and Preventing Discrimination
- Having conversations about the menopause

It's important point to emphasise that the concept of symptoms persisting for 12 months or more as a criterion for considering a condition a disability has been a part of the Equality Act 2010. This is not a new provision but rather a longstanding principle within the legislation. This clarification helps to contextualise the recent guidance within the broader framework of disability rights and accommodations.

Menstruation

The Period Dignity Project [was launched in 2019](#) at the School of Life Sciences, with the goal of raising awareness of issues such as the cost of menstruation and the cultural stigma around periods in wider society, aiming to improve understanding of periods and share kindness, respect and support to people who menstruate.

The Period Dignity Project is run by volunteers, and free products have been placed in all toilets in the School of Life Sciences areas and in many other schools on campus such as Media, Arts and Humanities (MAH); Engineering and Informatics; Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS); Education and Social Work (ESW); Law, Politics and Sociology (LPS); and the Meeting House. The Natracare products we use are organic, biodegradable, non-perfumed and have no plastics, and we also encourage people who can afford to do so to donate to the baskets.

We have a menstruation online peer support group, which provide a safe, inclusive space for all. Anyone wishing to join can contact k.flowers@sussex.ac.uk

Since it was launched, the project has distributed:

- **19,900** free period products in the School of Life Sciences alone, including 9,676 pads and 10,224 tampons
- **33,990** products across the wider campus community, including 16,702 pads and 17,288 tampons
- The School of Life Sciences distributed **90 bags** of mixed reusable pads, and **105 menstrual cups** during this year's Welcome Week to its students.

SEF supports free period products trial across campus!

Championed by the Period Dignity Project, new free period product dispensers are now available for anyone to use. New period product dispensers have been installed in toilet facilities across campus, replacing existing paid machines with dispensers containing free Natracare pads and tampons for anyone that needs them.

Location of dispensers can be found here

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/sef/servicecentre/facilities-on-campus>

These have been installed as part of an initiative started by the Period Dignity Project, working with Sussex Estates and Facilities (SEF), expanding upon an existing trial of two dispensers in the Schools of Life Sciences and MAH (Media, Arts and Humanities). The period product dispensers are monitored and stocked by volunteers in each building and supported by SEF – if the dispenser is empty, you can let us know via contact information next to each dispenser.

Kristy Flowers, Senior Technical Manager at the School of Life Sciences and co-founder of the Period Dignity Project, initiated the dispenser project last year and has worked to expand this to the wider campus community:

“Periods are still often stigmatised and something that people are ashamed of or make fun of, but they can be a very real cause of stress and embarrassment for many, inhibiting people’s daily lives, ability to work, learn, and exercise. The impacts of periods are magnified in minoritised groups, so we want to be as inclusive as possible.

“With the support of SEF we have been able to trial 15 dispensers across campus which is a great start. We cannot do this on our own and need the support of the whole campus to make sure the resources are provided and are reaching those in need.”

If you have any questions or ideas, you can contact the project team at period.dignity@sussex.ac.uk, and follow the project for more updates at [@perioddignityproject](https://www.instagram.com/perioddignityproject) on Instagram.