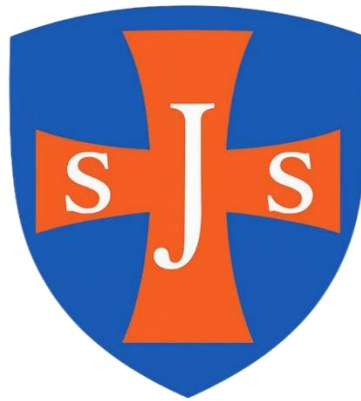


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## **MANAGING MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE – A GUIDE BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL FOR SCHOOLS**

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## Background

Menopause and its symptoms can have a serious effect on some women in the workplace. The menopause is a natural stage in women's lives and some simple changes could make working life during this time much easier. It is important to take time to understand this topic and support those with symptoms to be well at work.

Although reference in this guidance is made to women in menopause, it is recognized that it can also impact some transgender and non-binary people who will require support and flexibility relevant to their needs.

## What is the menopause?

The menopause is a natural part of ageing and represents a major change in a woman's life. For many women symptoms can impact daily life both inside and outside work.

The medical definition of the menopause is when a woman has her last period. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, although it can also occur prematurely (before 40). Peri-menopause is the period that leads to the menopause when many women start to experience symptoms.

## What happens during the menopause?

Around 30-60% of women experience intermittent physical and/or psychological symptoms during the menopause. These are associated with a decrease in the body's production of the hormone oestrogen.

Menopause symptoms vary widely between women and these symptoms may prolong for a period of time.

Symptoms of the menopause can be both physical and emotional. Some of these symptoms are outlined below:

Physical symptoms include:	Psychological symptoms include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hot flushes</li><li>• Palpitations</li><li>• Night sweats</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Joint and muscle pain</li><li>• Weakened bladder function</li><li>• Skin irritation and dryness</li><li>• Headaches</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Poor concentration</li><li>• Memory loss</li><li>• Loss of confidence</li><li>• Irritability</li><li>• Decreased confidence</li><li>• Insomnia</li></ul>

In some cases symptoms can be exacerbated by the work environment, for example if the classroom or office temperature is too high this can worsen or increase the frequency of hot flushes. A hot flush is a sudden onset of feverish heat all over the body; these can cause dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations and is one of the most common symptoms of the menopause.

Symptoms such as insomnia can reduce the ability to concentrate and stay focused.

Decreased confidence could affect a woman's feelings towards carrying out certain aspects of her role. Changes in mood and irritability could impact on relationships with others at work.

## **What support managers can put in place**

If your staff member does want to discuss it, you have an important role to play in ensuring that anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms gets the same support and understanding as if they had any other health issue.

The following information may be useful:

- regular, informal conversations to talk through any changes or other ways you can support.
- complete a risk assessment to ensure an employee's symptoms are not being exacerbated by their job.
- discuss appropriate adjustments - simple changes to someone's role or working environment can help ensure the menopause does not become a barrier to performance.
- be flexible with breaks where possible and make a quiet room available.
- check whether they have been to the GP and consider an occupational health referral if the staff member is finding it difficult to manage the symptoms.
- look at the impact of ventilation in the classroom/office and consider whether a fan would be appropriate.
- locate workstation away from a heat source, if possible.
- allow time off during the working day to attend medical appointments.
- encourage your staff member to take breaks where needed and discuss their workload where necessary
- It is important to remember that not all employees want to discuss this health matter with their manager and similar symptoms may be caused by something else.

## **Managing menopause symptoms at work**

For women who find their menopausal symptoms are affecting their wellbeing and their capacity to work:

- discuss what you are going through with your manager – in particular what they can do to support your practical needs.
- talk about your symptoms and solutions with colleagues, particularly those who are also experiencing symptoms and work out your preferred coping strategies. This can reduce pressure and stress and support your wellbeing.
- staying hydrated, breathing exercises, yoga and meditation can all help relieve menopause symptoms.
- find out more about information and support, see useful links below.
- see a GP for advice on available treatment options.

## **Useful links**

NHS – [Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk); [Early menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Women's Health Concern [The menopause - Women's Health Concern \(womens-health-concern.org\)](https://www.womens-health-concern.org)

CIPD's The Menopause at Work -A practical guide for people managers [The menopause at work: A guide for people professionals | CIPD](https://www.cipd.co.uk)

Menopause Support - [menopausesupport.co.uk – Supporting You Through Change](https://menopausesupport.co.uk)

Bupa menopause health information - [Menopause: Symptoms, causes and self help | Bupa UK](https://www.bupa.co.uk)

Menopause Matters - [Home - The Menopause Exchange \(menopause-exchange.co.uk\)](https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk)