

Managers' Guidance For Discussions With Staff

This guidance sets out key suggestions about how to manage conversations with staff about menopause. It provides information on the common symptoms of menopause, how they can impact in the workplace and suggestions for supporting staff experiencing these symptoms.

It is important to recognise that for many reasons the impact of the menopause may differ greatly for individuals. People who identify themselves as non-binary, transgender or from intersex communities may experience menopausal symptoms, and their menopause may be different.

We also understand that the menopause can be perceived differently by our diverse communities. The key is to always consider an individual in their own circumstances and support them according to their particular needs.

If a member of staff wishes to talk about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a staff member wishes to talk about a family member that they are supporting and how this is impacting on them, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Ask the member of staff what would be helpful to them and if appropriate suggest ways in which they could be supported (see symptoms below) –
- Refer to the Menopause Advice Sheet (Appendix 2);
- Agree actions, and how to implement them (you should use the template at Appendix 1a to record the meeting), so that all parties agree what has been discussed and the next steps before the meeting ends. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential and is stored securely.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.

(Note – for advice about supporting a member of staff absent with menopause symptoms please contact you HR Adviser)

Menopause Symptom Support

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health (OH) referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace. If the staff member discusses symptoms which are impacting on their ability to undertake their role, a referral to Occupational Health can

be made to ascertain whether the member of staff is fit for work or if there are workplace adjustments which can be implemented to support them at work. (An OH referral may still be made even if the staff member has not consulted their GP, however best practice is to advise staff to contact their GP in the first instance.)

Managers are not expected to know everything about the menopause, but the following table provides some suggestions about how some of the common symptoms might be managed/supported/mitigated.

Menopause symptoms may be both physical and psychological, and the following table suggests some possible adjustments but is not exhaustive. For further guidance on reasonable adjustments please contact your HR Adviser.

Menopause Symptom	Potential impact at work	Suggested adjustments
Daytime sweats and flushes (Hot flushes)	Less tolerant of workplace temperatures; workwear/ uniform may become uncomfortable; personal protective equipment (PPE), for example, face masks/visors may be uncomfortable if worn for long periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to supply of cold drinking water • Easy access to washroom facilities. • Avoid nylon or close-fitting uniforms • Where possible adapt uniform, e.g. by removing a jacket; • Look at ways to cool the working environment for staff affected, for example fans at workstations; move desks to near windows/open windows or away from a heat source and adjust air conditioning. • Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush. • Where possible limit the time wearing PPE.
Night-time sweats and flushes	Fatigue at work due to lack of sleep.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signpost to advice on improving sleep • Consider temporary adjustment of shift patterns to accommodate any difficulties. • Allow for flexible working. • Recognise potential need for sickness absence.
Difficulty sleeping	Fatigue at work due to lack of sleep (maybe compounded if shift work is carried out).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider temporary adjustment of shift patterns to accommodate any difficulties. • Allow for flexible working. • Recognise potential problem of increased absence in sickness absence policy
Urogenital problems, for example increased frequency, urgency to go to the toilet	Need to access toilet facilities more frequently; may need to drink more fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to toilet and washroom facilities. • Allow for more frequent breaks in work to go to toilet. • Easy access to supply of cold drinking water.
Irregular/Heavy periods	Need to access toilet and washroom facilities more frequently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to toilet and washroom facilities. • Allow for more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet. • Request an extra uniform; • Ensure sanitary products are available in washrooms (as marked on a University

		<p>map)/key points across the University, in order to obtain personal protection;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide storage space for a change of clothing
Headaches	Poor concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to drinking water; • Offer a quiet space to work; • Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices; • Have time out to take medication if needed.
Low Mood	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily for example learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected; work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission; • Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area; • Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'; • Suggest they contact the University's Employee Assistance Programme for support
Loss of Confidence	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily for example learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected; work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions; • Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues; • Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.
Poor Concentration	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily for example learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected; work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly; • Review task allocation and workload; • Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment; • Offer quiet space to work; • Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices; • Reduce interruptions; • Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed; • Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.
Anxiety	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote counselling services provided by the University's Employee Assistance programme

	example learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected; work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of work their area; • Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques; • Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk
Panic Attacks	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily for example learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected; work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission; • Identify a 'buddy' outside of work area; • Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques; • Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.
Loss of confidence; forgetfulness/ memory loss; difficulty concentrating; change in mood	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily for example learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected; work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage employee to discuss concerns openly at one-to-one meetings with manager or occupational health and negotiate possible adjustments. • Provide access to counselling services. • Address work related stress through risk assessment and implementation of the HSE's management standards
General itchiness	Uniforms may become uncomfortable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid nylon uniforms. • Comfortable working temperatures
Muscular aches and bone and joint pain	Moving and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.
Weight gain	Uniform may become uncomfortable; difficulties with mobility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote physical wellbeing at work through wellbeing initiatives.
Psychosocial and social impact	May feel isolated from work colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote physical and mental wellbeing at work. • Provide access to counselling through EAP. • Provide ability to network with colleagues experiencing similar issues