

## **MENOPAUSE GUIDANCE**

## Introduction

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The aim of this document is to provide information and guidance on the university's approach to supporting its staff who are affected by the associated symptoms of perimenopause and menopause. Furthermore, to raise awareness and help remove the myths, the taboos and prejudice that can often be associated with it.

The university is committed to the wellbeing of all its staff and therefore aims to create an environment where they feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms (or symptoms of a relative) and ask for support at work, and where managers feel confident in providing appropriate support.

The university is committed to its vision for 2030 to be the best modern university in the UK and its embedded strategic priority of inclusivity and culture.

This guidance upholds the university's commitment to supporting its investment in people and fostering an environment of freedom of expression where staff and students feel safe, accepted, and recognised for who they are without fear of exclusion.

By demonstrating its commitment to inclusivity, the university aims to create a workplace which promotes dignity and combats prejudice, where staff can comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner.

Whilst the resources signposted in this guidance at times refer to 'women', we acknowledge that staff who are non-binary and trans will experience the menopause and its associated symptoms whilst not identifying as a woman or female. This guidance is inclusive of and applies to all members of staff at the university regardless of their gender identity.

## What is Perimenopause and Menopause?

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Menopause is the stage in a woman's life when menstruation has stopped, following 12 months without a period. Menopause usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55 with the average age being 51 in the UK. The time leading up to menopause is known as perimenopause, when symptoms can start to appear, often in the early to mid-forties.

The biological change causes hormone levels to drop dramatically, in particular Oestrogen and Progesterone, causing symptoms which can last for several years.

Although the average age for menopause to occur is 51, for some it can happen much earlier and for several reasons. Around 1 in 100 people experience menopause before the age of 40, and 1 in 1000 under the age of 30 due to Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). Other causes of early menopause can be genetics, autoimmune disease, chemotherapy or radiation therapy, surgery, and certain environmental toxins.

## Symptoms of Perimenopause and Menopause and the Impact at Work

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Menopausal employees are the fastest-growing demographic in the workplace with nearly eight out of ten menopausal individuals in work. Three out of four experience symptoms and a quarter will experience debilitating symptoms.

The menopause transition is unique to the individual and experienced differently by everyone. Symptoms are wide ranging and may fluctuate and change. For some symptoms may only last for a short time, for others many years.

Symptoms caused by the biological change to the body during perimenopause and Menopause are both physical and psychological. Some of the physical symptoms can include hot flushes (sudden feelings of hot or cold in your face, neck and chest which can also make you dizzy), difficulty sleeping, headaches and migraines, muscle aches and joint pain, skin changes including dry and itchy skin. Some the mental health symptoms include low mood, anxiety, mood swings and low self-esteem as well as problems with memory or concentration (brain fog).

The symptoms are personal and sometimes embarrassing, meaning that menopause isn't always openly talked about and therefore can be a taboo subject in the workplace. Menopausal symptoms can negatively affect job performance resulting in a loss of confidence and research shows that almost a million employees have left their job because of these symptoms, resulting in valuable talent being lost from the workplace.

## Guidance for Staff

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The university recognises menopause as an occupational health issue and will seek to support employees during this transition. Staff who are experiencing symptoms at work relating to perimenopause or menopause are encouraged to discuss their needs with their manager if they feel able to do so.

Further guidance for employees on how to approach a conversation with their line manager can be found on the university's menopause web page.

The university recognises that staff members will experience menopause in a multitude of ways. Some staff members will not need any assistance with and require no medical intervention whilst others will have much more severe symptoms and require medical treatment or support. Each situation is different and there is no standard approach to supporting staff at work, therefore every staff member's situation and needs shall be treated individually.

The university wishes to support employees experiencing menopause related symptoms at work, or those who are affected by relatives who are, and will accommodate adjustments to the working environment and working patterns where it is possible to do so. The *Support and Resources* section at the end of this guidance signposts some useful links to online resources and organisations who

provide a range of information and support. Also in this section are some self-management tips for making healthier lifestyle choices which may alleviate some symptoms.

It is acknowledged that employees may also need support while their wife, partner, family member or loved one is menopausal.

The university provides a free and confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is available to employees and their family members and is run by CiC Confidential Care. The employee support service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. If counselling is the most helpful way forward for you, CiC will arrange for you to be referred for up to six sessions with a fully qualified therapist. Employees can contact CiC via the Freephone Adviceline, online 'Chat' or email and all contact details can be found under *Support and Resources* at the end of this guide. Further menopause support and information can also be found on the CiC website: [Well Online - Understanding Menopause \(well-online.co.uk\)](https://well-online.co.uk) and [Well Online - Women's Health \(well-online.co.uk\)](https://well-online.co.uk) – Note: To access these web pages you will need to log in to the CiC website using the login details under *Support and Resources* below

## Guidance for Managers

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Managers do not need to be menopause experts. The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen, keep an open mind, and avoid making assumptions about someone's condition or how it may be affecting their ability to do their job. Managers are advised to ensure that nobody experiences less favourable treatment and to treat every employee as an individual because symptoms can vary significantly from person to person. All meetings should be kept confidential with regular reviews as symptoms can fluctuate. As with any longstanding health-related condition, sympathetic and appropriate support from managers is crucial to provide staff with the support that they need.

Below are some examples of adjustments to a staff member's working conditions that could be implemented (where reasonably possible):

- Ensuring working time arrangements are flexible enough to meet the needs of those experiencing menopause e.g., staggered start and finish times may help to manage symptoms or having the flexibility to leave work suddenly if symptoms become severe and additional breaks are needed. Managers can also seek guidance from the [Working Principles](#)
- Providing a private area and the time needed to rest, recover, or make a call to access personal or professional support.
- Take into account temperature and lighting to help manage body temperature. Moving a desk to a cooler area or closer to a window that opens and making desk or hand-held fans easily available.
- Ensuring changing/ washing facilities are available for staff to change clothes during the working day.

- Where branded clothing is provided, consideration is given to natural fibres where possible, and providing additional clothing to ensure it is possible to change during the day. The requirement of branded clothing could also be adjusted if necessary.
- Allowing time off if a staff member cannot carry on working that day, in compliance with the university's *Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure*.

Alternatively, flexible working arrangements may be considered for those experiencing debilitating symptoms in accordance with the university's [Flexible Working Policy](#) and further advice on adjustments can be sought from the People Directorate.

Managers are advised to maintain regular ongoing dialogue regarding support required, including follow up meetings to review adjustments made and record any agreements made.

It is important to recognise that some people may not want to discuss the menopause and that any discussion should be led by the staff member and not instigated by the manager.

For further guidance and resources on having a supportive conversation with a staff member can be found on the university's menopause web page.

## Support and Resources

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### Internal Resources

<b>University Menopause Webpage</b>	Available on the university staff portal
<b>Women's Staff Network at Greenwich</b>	<a href="#">Women's Staff Network</a> Join the Women's Network using the above link then click "Join our Team"
<b>Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure</b>	Available on the university staff portal

### External Resources

<b>Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) CiC Confidential Care</b>	<p><b>To access the CiC Well Online website:</b>  <a href="http://www.well-online.co.uk">www.well-online.co.uk</a>  <b>Username:</b> Greenwichlogin  <b>Password:</b> wellbeing</p> <p><b>Freephone Adviceline:</b> 0800 085 1376            Available 24 Hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.</p> <p><b>Advice Online:</b> 'Live Chat' online or Skype            (Username: Confidential Care Adviceline)</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:assist@cicwellbeing.com">assist@cicwellbeing.com</a></p>
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**Next Generation Text (NGT):** If you have hearing difficulties, you can reach CiC on 18001 0800 085 1376.

### Online Resources

Ctrl + Click to follow each of the links below to access useful resources, advice and information.

[NHS Guidance on Menopause](#)

[Henpicked - Menopause in the Workplace](#)

[Henpicked - Women's Community Website](#)

[The Daisy Network - Support for Premature Menopause](#)

[The Menopause Exchange](#)

[Women's Health Concern \(the patient arm of the British Menopause Society\)](#)

[Rock My Menopause](#)

[BUPA Women's Health Hub](#)

[British Menopause Society](#)

[Menopause Matters](#)

[Menopause Support](#)

[Over The Bloody Moon - Removing the Muddle from Menopause](#)

### Tips for Self-Management

See below some tips on making healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms linked to menopause.

- Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms, in keeping bones healthy and reducing weight gain. [\*What you need to know about nutrition and menopause - Henpicked\*](#)
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Exercising regularly to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood, and maintain aerobic fitness levels. [\*Menopause: why you should get moving - Henpicked\*](#)
- Not smoking to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions such as cancer, heart disease and stroke.

- Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food, all of which can trigger hot flushes.
- Having access to natural light.
- Staying cool at night, wearing loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats.
- Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation to reduce stress levels and improve mood e.g., activities such as mindfulness, yoga, and tai chi.
- Seeking medical support where required.

### Dates for your Diary

- Every year October is designated as **World Menopause Awareness Month** and **World Menopause Day** is held annually on 18<sup>th</sup> October.
- **International Women's Day** is celebrated annually on 8<sup>th</sup> March.

Version	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
0.1	First Draft	Vanessa Roots Senior HR Policy Officer	October 2021
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0.3	Minor amendments to some wording and flow of the document. Web links updated.	Vanessa Roots Senior Workforce Policy Officer	July 2023