

Menopause Guidance

“We want Greenwich to be a great place to work where all staff thrive and succeed, feeling safe, accepted and recognised for who they are without fear of exclusion.

Part of the work we are doing is also highlighting that there is often a preconception that menopause only affects ‘women’ when we know that our staff who are non-binary or trans will also experience the menopause and its associated symptoms whilst not identifying as a woman or female.

Building on our menopause friendly status to achieve the Menopause Friendly Accreditation shows our commitment to long-term sustainable change that will ensure a truly inclusive culture for the future”

**Professor Jane Harrington,
Vice-Chancellor and CEO of the University
of Greenwich**

Independently accredited
menopause friendly employer



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Contents

Introduction.....	1
What is menopause?.....	1
Symptoms of menopause and the impact at work.....	1
Guidance and support for staff	2
Guidance and support for managers.....	3
Support and Resources	4
Top tips for managing menopause symptoms.....	5
Dates for your Diary	5
Related policies and guidance.....	6

Introduction

The aim of this guidance is to set out the university's approach to supporting staff who are affected by the associated symptoms of menopause and furthermore to raise awareness, break the taboo and remove any myths about menopause. All of the support and resources provided by the university are intended for any member of staff who is directly or indirectly affected by the menopause

Whilst this guidance and resources may 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.

The University of Greenwich are independently accredited as a 'Menopause Friendly Workplace' by Henpicked: Menopause in the Workplace. Our accreditation demonstrates the university's long term commitment to the wellbeing of our staff. It also reflects our aim to create an environment where staff feel safe, accepted and recognised for who they are without fear of exclusion and where they can seek the support they need.

What is menopause?

Menopause is experienced by most women. It is the stage in a woman's life when periods stop, following 12 months without a period. This change happens because the biological change in a woman's body causes hormone levels to drop dramatically, in particular the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years it is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

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. This is often in the early to mid-forties. Although the average age to reach menopause 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 menopause and the impact at work

In the UK women over 50 are the fastest-growing demographic in the workplace with nearly eight out of ten menopausal women in work. Research suggests that one in ten women will leave work due to their menopause symptoms resulting in valuable talent being lost from the workplace (*Source: Fawcett Society research, 2022*).

When we talk about 'menopause', we refer to the whole transition including perimenopause. Symptoms are typically experienced for several years and can have a significant impact on daily life, including relationships, social life, family life and work.

The menopause transition is different for everyone. Three in four women experience symptoms and for one in four people the symptoms can be debilitating. Symptoms are wide ranging, can fluctuate and change but usually start months or years before periods stop, during the perimenopause. For some they may only last for a short time, for others many years.

There are many symptoms which can manifest physically and mentally. The first sign of perimenopause is usually (but not always) a change in the normal pattern of periods, for example they may become irregular.

Some of the common mental health symptoms are:

- Low mood
- Mood swings
- Anxiety
- Low self-esteem or lacking confidence
- Memory problems or concentration (brain fog)

Some of common physical symptoms are:

- Hot flushes (sudden feelings of hot or cold in your face, neck and chest which can also make you dizzy)
- Night sweats.
- Problems sleeping (which may be caused by night sweats) causing fatigue and irritability.
- Palpitations (heartbeats suddenly become more noticeable)
- Headaches and migraines
- Muscle aches and joint pains
- Change in body shape and weight gain
- Skin change including dry and itchy skin
- Heavy periods

Menopause isn't always talked about openly and can be a taboo subject, but the work we are doing at the university is helping to challenge the stigma associated with menopause and break the taboo.

Guidance and support for staff

The university recognises that for anyone who is impacted by their menopause symptoms at work their experience will be unique to them.

There are a lot of resources, support and information available to staff via different platforms to suit different needs. The university have a dedicated menopause team who provide regular awareness training sessions for staff and also host 'menopause café's' which are informal but informative sessions, open to all colleagues who want to hear, learn or talk about menopause. Cafes are a confidential, safe and supportive space where colleagues can engage as much as they want to and learn about different aspects of the menopause and ways of supporting themselves. All training events and cafes are advertised via the university's central communications team.

Staff can also speak confidentially to one of our Menopause Champions who provide local support in faculties and directorates. Your local Menopause Champion can be found [here](#).

The full range of support available to staff can be found on the university's menopause web page [here](#). The [Support and Resources](#) section at the end of this guidance also signposts useful links to online resources information and support. Tips on self-care can also be found in this section. A colleague support pack for managing your menopause can be found [here](#).

The university recognises menopause as an occupational health issue and will seek to support employees experiencing menopause related symptoms at work and will accommodate adjustments to the working environment and working patterns where it is possible to do so. If an employee's symptoms are impacting on their work life, they are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager. It is acknowledged that employees may also need support while their wife, partner, family member or loved one is menopausal.

Many of our line managers have attended menopause awareness training sessions for managers and can also find guidance in this document.

Guidance and support for managers

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, 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. Managers can also refer to the university's [Heating and cooling policy](#) for guidance on purchasing portable fans.
- 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.

The university's menopause team provide regular awareness training sessions for line managers which may help managers to support their staff. Line managers may also wish to attend the 'menopause café's' also hosted by the menopause team. Whilst line managers are in a supporting role for their staff, they too may be experiencing the impact of menopause symptoms themselves and are encouraged to refer to the support for staff in this guidance.

A helpful Managers Information Pack can also be found [here](#).

Support and Resources

<u>UOG SUPPORT AND RESOURCES</u>	<u>EXTERNAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES</u>
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Staff members can access free information, advice and confidential support (including counselling), available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Full details can be found here.	Menopause support, information and resources:
Menopause at UoG Menopause web page Join the Menopause Teams Hub	Henpicked Expert menopause advice to help people make informed choices. henpicked.net
Menstrual Health at UoG Menstrual Health Guidance Join the Menstrual Health Teams Hub	The Menopause Exchange Free, independent and practical advice about the perimenopause, menopause, midlife and post-menopausal health. menopause-exchange.co.uk
Wellbeing Days Staff can take up to two Wellbeing Day's during the 12 months between 1st October to 30th September. Staff can take a Wellbeing Day when they have an immediate need to take care of their mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing days can be booked in Horizon. Further guidance can be found here.	The British Menopause Society British Menopause Society
Mental Health First Aiders The 'wellbeing assistance' on the SafeZone App allows you to chat with a mental health first aider during office hours. Find out more and download the app here.	Women's Health Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society) womens-health-concern.org
Staff Wellbeing Network	NHS Menopause nhs.uk
	Menopause Matters menopausematters.co.uk
	Over the Bloody Moon overthebloodymoon.com
	Rock My Driving awareness, education and action in women's health rockmy.com
	POI (Premature Ovarian Insufficiency; early menopause before the age of 40) The Daisy Network are a charity supporting women with POI daisynetwork.org

The university's Staff Wellbeing Network is a social community whose aim is to improve staff wellbeing through positive activities, signposting, and open conversations about mental health. Staff can find out more and join [here](#).

Mental health and wellbeing at the university.

Details about the university's support for staff can be found [here](#).

Periods and menopause

[PMS, PMDD and menopause - Dr Louise Newson](#)

NICE Guidelines

[The National Institute for Health & Care Excellence \(NICE\) guidelines](#) outline how a GP will determine what types of treatments/interventions they can offer.

Top tips for managing menopause symptoms

Nutrition and diet

- ✓ Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- ✓ Limit caffeine, spicy food and alcohol which can trigger hot flushes and night sweats.
- ✓ Support bone health with calcium rich foods e.g. milk, yoghurt, kale.
- ✓ Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water.

 **Read: *What you need to know about nutrition and menopause - Henpicked***

Exercise and physical activity

- ✓ Exercising regularly can reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood.
- ✓ Aim for 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise per week or a combination of both.
- ✓ Aim for 2 days per week of muscle-strengthening activity (weights, bands, body weight).
- ✓ Stretch to ease joint and muscle pain.

 **Read: *Menopause: why you should get moving - Henpicked***

Wellbeing and emotional support

- ✓ Practice relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation or breathing exercises.
- ✓ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can also help support mood swings, anxiety and sleep issues.
- ✓ Talk to others going through menopause to reduce isolation – why not join the university's informal menopause cafes and support sessions.

Sleep hygiene

- ✓ Keep your bedroom cool (around 18°C).
- ✓ Where breathable layers.
- ✓ Maintain a regular sleep routine.
- ✓ Use a fan to keep cool.
- ✓ Avoid stimulants such as alcohol, caffeine and screens before bed.
- ✓ Use calming techniques before bedtime like gentle stretching and reading.

Dates for your Diary

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

Related policies and guidance

Hybrid working

The university operates [Working Principles and Guidelines](#), which offer hybrid working and may assist an employee to work flexibly where it is appropriate for their role. Employees should discuss hybrid working with their line manager in the first instance.

Flexible working

If an employee wishes to make a flexible working request, they are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager first. Employees should make a formal flexible working request in accordance with the requirements and procedures in the university's [Flexible Working Policy](#).

Sickness/paid leave

If an employee is unwell and unfit for work due to their menopause symptoms, including where they experience the onset of symptoms during the working day, they will normally receive full pay. Full details can be found in our [Sickness Absence Policy](#).

Time off for medical appointments

If employees need time off to attend a medical appointment, they should notify their line manager. Where an employee gives their line manager reasonable notice of the date and time of an appointment, time off with full pay will be granted. Full details can be found in our [Sickness Absence Policy](#).

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