

Menopause Guidance

Summer 2021



Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for a number of reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, gender transitioning, conditions needing hormone treatment, and menopause. These can bring about symptoms which could affect a colleague at work.

Throughout this guidance, the terms 'women', 'female', 'her' will most frequently be used. However, this is inclusive of, and recognises, that people from different communities can also experience menopausal symptoms.

This guidance focuses on menopause, and uses a few key terms:

Menopause: the point at which a woman's oestrogen levels decline, and she stops having periods. Menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years so it's best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event and the word menopause is used as an umbrella term to cover all stages.

Perimenopause: this is the phase leading up to the menopause when a woman's hormone balance starts to change, and when she may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some women this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.

Post-menopause: the stage after menopause which can last for the rest of a woman's life. Symptoms can be experienced at any stage of the menopause.

Andropause: or 'male menopause' describes age-related changes in male hormone levels usually experienced by individuals in their late 40s to early 50s. It may also be referred to as testosterone deficiency, androgen deficiency, and late-onset hypogonadism.

WHO is this guidance for?

At the University of Surrey, we aim to support all staff experiencing menopausal symptoms and help colleagues and line managers understand how they can support employees experiencing such symptoms.

WHY is this guidance important?

The menopause is experienced by most women, usually between the ages of 45-55, though some women can experience it earlier than this, due to 'premature menopause' or surgery. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically; are different for everyone; and for a quarter of women they are severely debilitating. Symptoms can have a huge effect on a woman's comfort and performance when working. This guidance is therefore imperative to ensure we provide an inclusive and supportive working environment in the office and whilst working from home for women experiencing the menopause.

Symptoms vary greatly, and commonly include (but aren't limited to):

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory loss
- depression
- headaches
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- reduced concentration
- heavy periods

Research suggests that, for 30% of women, the recent global pandemic has made the physiological and mental symptoms of menopause worse¹.

This guidance sets out the support available to women before, during and after the menopause. It is designed to ensure women suffering with menopausal symptoms can feel empowered to ask for adjustments to ease such symptoms without embarrassment, can carry out their daily role in a safe working environment whether at home or in the office, and can have open discussions with colleagues and line managers so that they feel part of an inclusive work culture.

What is the male menopause and what causes it?

'Male menopause' is the more common term for andropause which describes age-related changes in male hormone levels usually experienced by individuals in their late 40s to early 50s. It may also be referred to as testosterone deficiency, androgen deficiency, and late-onset hypogonadism.

Symptoms of the male menopause

The male menopause can cause physical and psychological symptoms which typically worsen with age. They can include:

- low energy
- depression or sadness
- decreased motivation
- lowered self-confidence
- difficulty concentrating
- insomnia or difficulty sleeping
- increased body fat
- reduced muscle mass and feelings of physical weakness
- decreased bone density

The duration and severity of these symptoms will vary however some men may experience these uncomfortable effects for up to 20 years as the body gradually adjusts to lower testosterone production.

How is the male menopause diagnosed and how can its symptoms be managed?

A GP can measure a man's testosterone levels by undertaking a blood test.

The most common types of treatment for symptoms of the male menopause are:

- Lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, managing stress and having enough sleep
- Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) - tablets, skin patches, gels, implants and injections that relieve menopausal symptoms by replacing testosterone.

WHAT are the details of this guidance?

Minor adjustments to an employee's working environment can make a huge difference. If an employee is experiencing menopausal symptoms, the following options are available:

Desk Fans and Temperature

When in the office, desk fans and temperature queries can be discussed with your local

¹ Source: Survey by The Menopause Hub, April 2020

facilities manager or contact [central facilities](#) or via the [DSE assessment](#) process.

Quiet/Cool Room

It can be helpful to take time out to help manage symptoms when working at home, but when in the office, there are quiet, cool and private spaces on campus should an employee need it. For details of available facilities contact [central facilities](#).

Occupational Health

A working environment assessment can ensure that an employee's physical environment, whether at home or in the office, is not making their menopausal symptoms worse.

Flexible Working

We recognise that flexibility is key to anyone suffering as a result of transitioning through the menopause and aims to facilitate flexible working wherever possible.

Our Flexible Working Policy can be found [here](#). Should an employee require a more temporary/flexible change, working arrangements could include:

- more breaks and time away from their computer
- flexibility to work in other areas of the building when in the office
- earlier start times and finish times to avoid peak travel times when travelling into the office
- a request to reduce working hours on a temporary basis
- turning their camera off when on Teams calls, and having a walking meeting instead if helpful

These should be discussed and agreed with the employee's line manager and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure these adjustments continue to meet the needs of the employee.

Sickness/Paid Leave

An employee may feel unwell and unfit for work due to menopausal symptoms, and if so, the University will support them. This includes the sudden onset of symptoms during the working day.

Details of our Sickness Absence Policy can be found [here](#). This entitles an employee to take paid leave for up to seven consecutive days without needing a fit note from their doctor.

Whilst an employee can simply inform their line manager they are unfit for work, they should also feel they can be open about the reason for their menopause-related leave with their line manager without fear of being discriminated against.

General Support

The University aims to facilitate an open, understanding working environment and so we encourage employees to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated, and the necessary support made available.

Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with:

- A trusted colleague
- A [Menopause Advocate](#)
- The [Menopause Network](#)
- [Women@Surrey](#)
- [HR Operations](#)
- A Wellbeing Champion ([the full list can be accessed from the Centre for Wellbeing](#))
- A Mental Health First Aider ([the full list can be accessed from the Centre for Wellbeing](#))

Medical support

We encourage employees to speak to their GP when they are experiencing symptoms.

Employees can also contact one of the University's menopause advocates if they are interested in finding out more about speaking to a medical menopause specialist.

[BUPA](#) also offer guidance on menopause to members.

Counselling at the Centre for Wellbeing

The [Centre for Wellbeing](#) also offers support, advice and counselling to help with the emotional and psychological effects of menopause. It's free and easy to access and is available online, on the telephone or in person.

HOW do you now go about things?

The following identifies our responsibilities as employees, colleagues, line managers and the University overall.

Employees/Colleagues should:

- Educate themselves about the menopause and become familiar with the terms of this guidance. Understand what information is available. Seek advice and guidance from

available support provided at the University. Support colleagues.

- Download the [Menopause Toolkit](#)
- Be as open and honest as possible with line managers – reviewing and working through the available options together to ensure appropriate measures which support their working environment are in place.
- Agree to keep their line manager and the University informed to ensure that the right support is being provided.
- If unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supportive, speak to one of the people mentioned in ‘General Support’ (above).

Line Managers should:

- Download the [Menopause Toolkit](#)
- Take part in future menopause awareness training.
- Ensure they are aware of the support the University provides and the terms of this guidance.
- Ensure all members of their team are aware of the policies and where to find information and seek support.
- Ensure they listen to the needs of each employee individually and are open and willing to have discussions around the menopause, ensuring confidentiality where requested by the employee.
- Work together with the employee to ensure that the right support is provided that satisfies both the University and the employee’s needs.
- Ensure regular check-ins are in place to review any support and make any necessary changes to an employee’s working environment or patterns that are required from both the University/the employee’s perspective. Regular check-ins are particularly important when working remotely.

The University should:

- Ensure it reviews its health and wellbeing policies and practices on a regular basis.
- Ensure its health offerings (Occupational Health) have provisions to support employees experiencing the menopause.

- Listen and work with employees and employee rep groups to support and drive change in relation to the menopause.

WHERE can you get related information?

The following are links to some information that you may find useful. We are aware there is a lot of guidance available, and everyone is different so please use this as a guide only and do let us know if there are any links that should be added to this list:

- [Menopause Doctor](#) Dr Louise Newson’s comprehensive, evidence-based website
- [Menopause matters](#) which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- [The Daisy Network charity](#), which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency;
- [Free NHS talking therapies](#) to manage the emotional and psychological effects of menopause and menopausal symptoms.
- [The Menopause Café](#) which provides opportunity to gather, eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.
- [Henpicked](#) an online community that gives women a place to have their say, promote healthy debate and bring about positive change. They also provide ‘lunch and learn’ videos with industry wide experts that can be accessed [here](#);
- [MegsMenopause](#) an ‘honest and frank’ look at all things menopause.
- [University Menopause webpages](#)
- [Menopause Toolkit](#)
- [NHS Choices](#) – provides advice on symptoms and treatments for the female menopause.
- [NHS Choices](#) – provides information on symptoms of the male menopause
- [NICE Guidelines](#) - evidence-based recommendations for health and care in England
- [National Institute of Medical Herbalists](#) provide advice on herbal remedies
- We also recommend this [practical guide](#) for people managers from the CIPD, which offers guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach the conversations about it appropriately and sensitively.

This guidance was introduced by the University's Menopause Network, in July 2021, to ensure the University provides the best support for those transitioning through the menopause. Please get in touch if you have any feedback or feel there are other ways the University could provide support:

menopause@surrey.ac.uk

Please note: This guidance does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and the University may amend it at any time.