



Menopause Support at Avalere Health

This document isn't just for those directly experiencing menopause—it's for everyone.

In this document we aim to support colleagues experiencing perimenopause, menopause and post-menopause symptoms, and to educate and create a mutual understanding between employees and line managers so that they can support those who are experiencing symptoms.

We recognise that everyone's experience of menopause is different. Avalere Health is committed to offering the same level of understanding, support and flexibility to everyone.

This document sets out the support available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms. It is created to ensure that individuals:

- Feel empowered to ask for adjustments to ease such symptoms without embarrassment
- Can carry out their role in a supportive environment, whether at home or in the office
- Can talk openly to those that can support them

What is Menopause?

Every menstruating person experiences menopause. It follows a gradual decline (not an abrupt stop) in ovarian hormone production, oestrogens, progesterone, and androgens (notably testosterone), across the menopausal transition. This applies to most cisgender women, and to transgender men and non-binary people who retain ovaries (timing and symptoms can differ, especially with surgeries or gender-affirming hormones).



Menopause: This is diagnosed retrospectively after a menstruating person has had no periods for 12 consecutive months.

Key Features

- Decreased ovarian function: ovaries stop releasing eggs and producing hormones particularly oestrogen and progesterone
- Decreased hormone production can lead to a vast array of physical, psychological and sexual symptoms
- The average age in the UK is 51, but menopause is considered normal between 45 and 55
- Early menopause is between 40 and 45 years of age
- Although rare, some will experience premature ovarian insufficiency under the age of 40 and should be referred for specialist care
- Menopause can be induced by surgery or by some medical treatments such as chemotherapy

Perimenopause: This is the time leading up to menopause.



Key Features

- Changing menstrual patterns
- The onset of various physical, psychological and sexual symptoms
- The duration varies but can be between 7-10 years

Postmenopause: This is the time after menopause and lasts for the rest of a person's life.



For the purpose of this support document, any reference to menopause includes perimenopause.

Symptoms

Each person's experience of menopause will differ and many will suffer for years without realising the symptoms they are experiencing are connected to their hormones. The symptoms include (but are not limited to):

Physical Symptoms

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| • Night sweats | • Muscle pains and joint stiffness | • Recurring urinary tract Infections |
| • Hot flushes | • Bladder frequency, urgency, leakage | • Menstrual cycle changes, including very heavy periods |
| • Fatigue | | |
| • Headaches and/or worsening migraines | | |

Physiological Symptoms

- Mood disturbances
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Memory loss
- Difficulty with concentration
- Panic attacks
- Loss of confidence

Sexual Symptoms

- Reduced libido
- Vaginal atrophy
- Body image changes
- Painful intercourse

Treatments

Government guidelines, including the UK's N.I.C.E guideline (NG23) and the North American Menopause Society (NAMS), promote individualised care for menopause by encouraging shared decision making and tailoring treatment to a person's needs, symptoms and values.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) should be offered as a first line treatment for those experiencing symptoms of menopause.

HRT

- Modern HRT is low-dose and body-identical so will be recognised by the body in the same way as the hormones it used to make for itself
- Most people using HRT will have a significant improvement in their symptoms
- Any initial side effects such as breast tenderness and breakthrough bleeding will tend to resolve within a few months

Non-Hormonal Treatments

These should be offered to those who cannot take HRT or choose not to. These include various prescription medications such as anti-depressants, supplements and herbal remedies and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Diet / Lifestyle

Every person who experiences menopause should be aware of the benefits in controlling symptoms by eating a healthy, balanced diet and exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy weight, limiting alcohol and stopping smoking.

For Those Experiencing Menopause

Talk to Us

We want our people to feel comfortable and empowered to ask for the support they need.

- If you are finding it difficult to cope at work because of menopausal symptoms, you can speak to your line manager, if you wish to do so.
- If for any reason you are unable to approach your line manager, you can speak to your People Partner or the Benefits Team.
- You may be a private person or feel uncomfortable to talk openly about what you're experiencing, but we're keen to support you in a way that works best for you and would encourage you to be as open as you're comfortable being, with whoever you feel most comfortable with.
- Any health-related information disclosed during discussions with your line manager or the People Team will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

Our goal is to ensure that all line managers are provided with adequate information and resources so that they can support individuals experiencing adverse menopausal symptoms.

Support and Adjustments

While many who experience menopause will be able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of symptoms at work. Minor adjustments can make a huge difference.

If someone is experiencing menopausal symptoms, the following options are available:

Flexible Working

Requests for flexible working can be made informally or formally, and may include:

- A change to the pattern of hours worked
- Increased homeworking
- A reduction in working hours
- Taking more frequent breaks

This list is not exhaustive. Any request should be discussed and agreed with your line manager and People Partner, and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the adjustments continue to support your needs. We will try to facilitate flexible working arrangements wherever possible, although this cannot be guaranteed.

Office Working Environment

- If you need time out to take a short break to manage symptoms or to take medication, or need a quiet space to work, these are available in most of our offices.
- Practical adjustments can also be made, such as moving your workstation to a cooler area or providing you with a fan. Your People Partner will work with you to accommodate this.
- Air conditioning is available in each office building, along with chilled water.

Time Off

- There is no expectation on you to work if you are unwell because of menopausal symptoms.
- Unless otherwise set out in your contract, if you are sick and unable to work, you should follow the sickness policy and reporting procedure.
- You do not have to disclose that your absence is related to menopause if you wish to keep this private. However, we want you to feel that if you wish to do so, you can be open about the reason for your leave so that we can support you.

Ability to Perform Your Role

We don't want to make any assumptions about the impact of menopause on anyone's ability to perform in their role, but we do recognise that experiencing long-term symptoms of the perimenopause, menopause or post-menopause may pose a challenge to some of our people. If you feel menopause may be affecting your ability to perform in your role, please speak to your manager and/or the People Team so we can discuss how we can best support you and any adjustments that may help.

Notably we understand that loss of confidence may also be a contributing factor to how you may feel within your role. If this is something you think may be affecting you, please speak to our People Team as they will be able to recommend talking therapies through our various healthcare providers who specialises in dealing with menopause.

Our Commitment

We recognise that menopause is not a point in time; it involves various stages and will be different for everyone, therefore, your support needs may change over time. Please speak to us, we're keen to hear what we can do to make your experience at work more comfortable.



For Managers and Teams

Be Considerate, Understand and Support

- Take time to read through this policy and understand what someone experiencing menopausal symptoms may be dealing with, and how this can impact their working life.
- Understand how to recognise the symptoms and what support could be helpful so you can be there for someone without them necessarily having to open up to you, if they're not comfortable doing so.
- If someone does open up to you about how they're feeling, be considerate about what they may need from you as a teammate or manager even if they're not asking for anything.
- Consider our LinkedIn Learning course: [Menopause in the Workplace: A Guide to Supporting Your Colleagues](#).

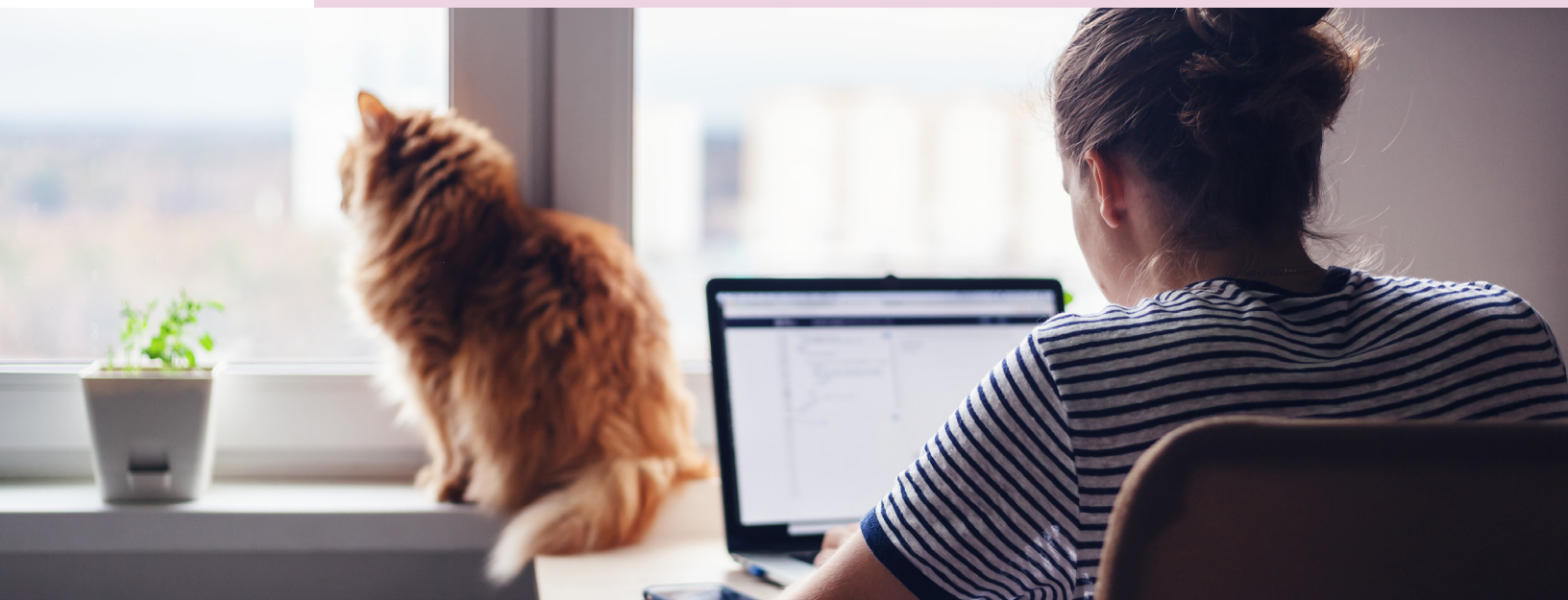
If You're Unsure, Speak to the People Team

- If you have any concerns or are unsure how to support or manage someone experiencing menopause, please speak to the People Team who can support you.
- It's also worth speaking to the individual. Creating a trusting and open environment will make them feel more comfortable opening up to you about what they're experiencing and what they need from you.
- Since a variety of people could be experiencing menopause including trans men and non-binary people, try to keep your language gender-neutral when discussing this in a group as this will encourage those people to access support and ask for help.

- Menopause could also cause increased feelings of gender dysphoria for some trans people, which could make them reluctant to discuss it. The best route to take is just to follow their lead and support them where you can.
- It's important to treat anyone going through menopause fairly and acknowledge there may be some need for reasonable adjustments to support them as they manage their symptoms. If at any point you feel, as a manager, it's starting to impact their performance or something isn't quite right, have a chat with them to understand what's happening and agree on appropriate support mechanisms. The People Team can also assist you with this.

Be Open

- Please encourage people to openly discuss menopause – at work, at home, with friends. While this topic remains behind closed doors, it continues to have an unnecessary stigma.



Employee Benefits and Resources

We have several resources available that you can access for support.



People Team: The People Team are always available to speak to if you have any questions or require support. You can email the [Benefits Team](#) or contact your People Partner.



GENDER Employee Network Group (ENG): Our ENGs provide a safe space to discuss topics related to periods, menopause and more. You can join an ENG through this [link](#).



ZAOWOMEN: A partner of Avalere Health's – a women's health education and support organisation offering training, access to healthcare professional hormone support and health coaching. Link [here](#).



UK Employee Benefits and Resources

- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):** You can use our EAP to speak to an independent adviser on a confidential basis about any issue that is troubling you.
 - UK confidential helpline: 08083 043 698 (available 24/7)
 - Additional information is available online through our Connect link [here](#).
- **Peppy UK and Ireland:** Peppy is a team of experienced nurses and emotional support practitioners who provide support in areas including menopause. For more information, visit our Connect page for Peppy UK and Ireland [here](#).
- **Occupational Health (UK only):** In some cases, we may refer you to Occupational Health so that they can advise on how your symptoms are impacting you at work and recommend adjustments that may be appropriate. They may also signpost you to external sources for help and advice.



US Employee Benefits and Resources

- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):** You can use our EAP to speak to an independent adviser on a confidential basis about any issue that is troubling you.
 - US confidential helpline: 1-800-523-5668 (available 24/7)
 - Additional information is available online through our Connect link [here](#).
- **Peppy US and Global:** Peppy is a team of experienced nurses and emotional support practitioners who provide support in areas including menopause. For more information, visit our Connect page for Peppy US [here](#).
- **Visana:** a virtual health clinic in the Cigna health plan network, Visana's team of health doctors, nurse practitioners and health coaches will help you better understand your body and get answers to your medical questions. Get more information or make an appointment [here](#).



Additional Resources

- **Menopause Matters**: Information on menopause, symptoms and treatment options
- **The Daisy Network**: Support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency
- **Queer/LGBTQ+ Menopause**: A collection of menopause resources and research that is explicitly inclusive of LGBTQ+ people
- **Menopause Whilst Black**: Menopausal experience of Black UK based women
- **The Menopause Café**: Events where people can meet to discuss menopause openly
- **Let's Talk Menopause!**: A national nonprofit organisation focused on changing the conversation around menopause, so people get the information and healthcare they need

If you have any questions or need further guidance, please reach out to your **People Partner**.