

Royal Mail Group Menopause Guide - Supporting Women at Work through the Menopause

What is it?

The menopause is when a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to get pregnant naturally. Periods usually start to become less frequent and more irregular over a few months or years before they stop altogether. The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, but occasionally occurs much earlier or later than this.

How does it affect people?

In Britain, nearly three quarters of women seek advice from their GPs about menopausal symptoms. Common symptoms that may affect work are:-

- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Sleep disruption
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating and poor memory
- Depression and anxiety

Although most women are able to carry on their personal and working lives normally for others their symptoms have a severe adverse effect. Symptoms typically last around 4 years.

Treatment can include Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Reducing stress, eating a healthy, balanced diet and exercising regularly – maintaining a healthy weight and staying fit and strong can improve some menopausal symptoms.

How might it affect work?

Work can affect women going through the menopause in various ways.

Hot flushes can be very uncomfortable and also embarrassing when they happen at work. The best way to manage these is to stay cool and to cool down quickly if one happens. Workplace factors can make this more difficult, for instance, in some workplaces air conditioning is not well controlled or it is not possible to open windows or improve ventilation; in others radiators or sun shining directly through windows may cause hot areas in the office. Having the heating at a lower level, moving their workstation to a cooler area of the office, having a desk fan, avoiding hot drinks and access to cool drinking water will all help. Women who have to wear a uniform may need to be allowed to wear alternative looser fitting, thinner garments or layers that can be easily removed if they are having flushes or sweating.

Stress at work is likely to make symptoms of depression and anxiety worse and can also make hot flushes worse.

Difficulty concentrating and poor memory may make some tasks problematic and different approaches to managing information may be necessary.

For some people flexible working times may help to avoid travelling on busy transport or cope with disrupted sleep.

What do I need to do as a manager?

Women who are experiencing problems at work due to the menopause need support from their manager, as with any longstanding health-related condition this is crucial and can make a major difference.

- Talk to the individual in an understanding and supportive way.
- Support them where possible by making any necessary changes to help them to keep cool, manage stress levels and manage any problems that they are having with memory or concentration.
- Signpost them to helplines and sources of advice and guidance for managing their symptoms and lifestyle.
- Menopausal women may experience bouts of feeling unwell at work, so managers should take a flexible and sympathetic approach to requests for a break or return home if they become unwell at work.

Key points to consider when managing and employee who is going through the menopause

- Not everyone wants to talk about issues so personal to them, but if they do you need to listen and be understanding of the issue.
- Women may feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, especially if they are younger or a man and they may wish to speak to a different manager or the Feeling First Class Support phone line on 0800 6888 777 to talk to someone confidentially for advice.

Sources of information and guidance

First Class Support phone line on 0800 6888 777 to talk to someone confidentially for advice, guidance or support, 24/7, or if you are a manager and want to have a conversation, possibly on a topic you feel uncomfortable addressing, the advisors on the First Class Support line can coach you to have that conversation.

Feeling First Class website for ideas on taking up a healthy lifestyle to help manage menopausal symptoms, www.feelingfirstclass.co.uk use the code FFC1 to sign up.

Feeling First Class Stress for stress risk assessment and guidance for managing stress

<https://intranet.royalmailgroup.com/HealthSafety/Pages/FFC-Stress.aspx>

If they are experiencing mental health related issues e.g. depression and/or anxiety – eLearning Mental Health Awareness and Managers Mental Health - Health Minds Matter on PSP Success Factors, tools and support on Feeling First Class Stress

<https://intranet.royalmailgroup.com/HealthSafety/Pages/FFC-Stress.aspx>

Person Specifically at risk assessment [LINK](#)

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Guidance endorsed by the CWU and Unite/CMA

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