

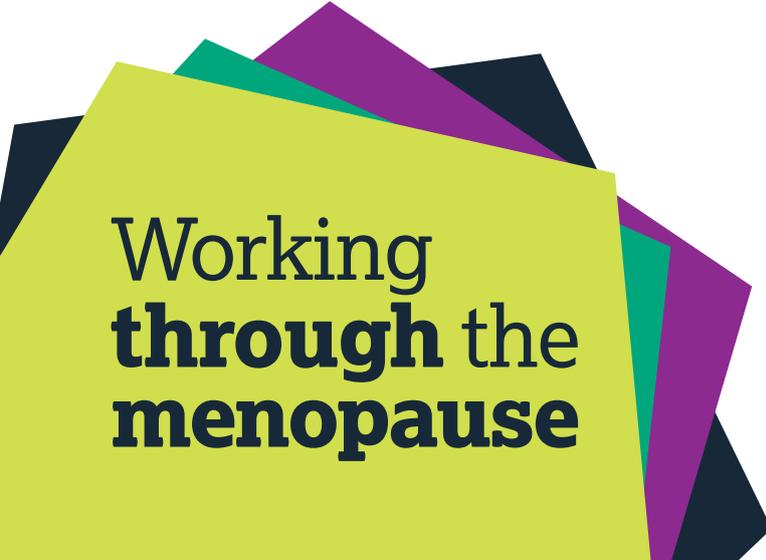
Menopause guide and checklist for leaders

NEU leadership members are key to supporting women going through the menopause in the workplace. As a leader, you're not alone. Collaboration between leaders, governors, workplace reps, health and safety reps and a staff support network can go a long way towards creating a supportive environment for women experiencing menopause symptoms at work.

Implementing a few simple steps will encourage good relations among your staff and will avoid unnecessary disputes arising.

Menopause support in the workplace - a leadership checklist

- ✓ Read our guide for members – a whole workplace approach to supporting menopausal women in the workplace will ensure that the needs of all women are met, including women leaders.
- ✓ Recommend adoption of the NEU model menopause policy – consult trade unions.
- ✓ Use the individual support guide for leaders - if individual members of staff require assistance.
- ✓ Consider the many benefits of supporting menopausal women – with your leadership team and your board of governors:
 - reduces attrition
 - retains experienced, qualified, committed and effective staff
 - contributes to staff wellbeing
 - improves transparency and trust
 - improves the motivation of all staff
 - reduces recruitment costs
 - reduces disruption to pupils/students
 - avoids grievances about potential age, sex or disability discrimination.
- ✓ Support requests for flexibility – eg, to undertake non-contact time at home and requests to reduce hours or change hours temporarily.
- ✓ Give control to individual teachers and support staff over their immediate working environment – a clear message will empower staff and reduce requests to the leadership team.
- ✓ Ensure that menopausal women have easy access to cold water, toilet and washing facilities.



Working
**through the
menopause**



- ✔ Allow women to store sanitary products in the toilet and washing spaces.
- ✔ Ensure that women have secure space to store an emergency bag, a towel and a change of clothes – this applies to agency workers and supply teachers too.
- ✔ Be aware of the impact of the menopause in the workplace - and improve menopause awareness within the leadership team, eg through equality and diversity training and CPD.
- ✔ Encourage and secure access to support – eg, workplace peer support groups and mentoring or buddying schemes to encourage women to share experiences, tips and overcome any barriers.
- ✔ Ensure that risk assessments take account of the needs of menopausal women and that measures or adjustments effectively remove or control risks.
- ✔ Nurture a menopause aware workplace to enable women to disclose their condition, to seek advice, support and any appropriate adjustments.
- ✔ Be aware of how the menopause might impact on appraisal or pay progression for teachers; consider adjusting objectives to take account of menopause-related absence or where menopause symptoms may have impacted on performance.
- ✔ Be supportive of women who are absent for menopause related reasons – adjust any absence monitoring arrangements to reduce stress.
- ✔ Avoid detrimental treatment related to menopause – this could amount to unlawful discrimination or harassment.
- ✔ Challenge negative menopause stereotypes and try to reduce stigma around the menopause - and encourage your colleagues to do the same.
- ✔ Demonstrate your support for older women and women going through the menopause – eg, by supporting requests for counselling or other emotional support and use the NEU individual support guide for leaders.
- ✔ Display the NEU Working Through the Menopause poster.

Supporting individual colleagues through the menopause – a guide for leaders

Every woman will have a different experience of the menopause. A supportive workplace culture will provide a helpful foundation. Leaders can build on this foundation by applying the following guidelines to support individual workers.

If a colleague wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- allow adequate time to have the conversation
- find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality
- encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) – direct them to the NEU guidance for members
- agree actions, and how to implement them
- agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room
- review actions and follow up agreed adjustments.

Symptoms support

Symptoms can manifest physically and psychologically. Support for women should be considered as detailed below.

Hot flushes

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source.
- Provide easy access to drinking water.
- Encourage use of the staff room for breaks.

Heavy/light periods

- Have permanent access to washroom facilities.
- Ensure sanitary products are available.

Urogenital problems

This will include an increased frequency and urgency to pass urine, with a need to access toilet facilities more frequently and to drink more fluids. Suitable adjustments may include:

- providing ready access to suitable toilet facilities
- providing ready access to suitable washing facilities
- allowing more frequent breaks to go to the toilet
- providing easy access to drinking water.

Headaches

- Have ease of access to fresh water.
- Use the staff room as a quiet place to work when not teaching or when time out is required.
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Low mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area.
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'.

Loss of confidence

- Ensure there are regular personal development discussions.
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Poor concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse.
- Review task allocation and workload.
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment.
- Offer quiet space to work.

Anxiety

- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of work their area – ask the health and wellbeing committee for support.
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques.
- Encourage your colleague to undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Panic attacks

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
- Identify a 'buddy' outside of work area.
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Muscular aches and bone and joint pain

For individuals experiencing these symptoms, moving and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable. Suitable adjustments may include making any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety. If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an occupational health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.