

# Menopause and Menstrual Health: Workplace Adjustments Guide



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# 1. Aim

This document will help make you aware of some of the menopause and menstrual health related symptoms. It will also detail the different types of workplace adjustments that could be considered for staff whose symptoms are affecting their working life.

We recommend that this resource be used with the [Line Managers Guide](#). Together, they will help you to:

- Promote an inclusive and supportive working environment where staff feel confident in raising issues on how their menopause or menstrual health related symptoms impact them.
- Be confident about your role in managing staff who may need additional workplace support due to the impact of their menopause or menstrual health related symptoms.
- Identify appropriate workplace changes or adjustments to support staff so they can remain in the workplace.

Although the terms 'woman' and 'women' are used throughout, this guide is inclusive of transgender, non-binary, and intersex staff who may also experience menopause and menstrual health related symptoms.

**Staff and managers should look at [NHS Inform](#) and the [Menopause and Menstrual Health: Guidance for Employers](#) resources. If concerns about your staff member's health remain or they continue to experience troublesome symptoms, we encourage them to seek professional medical advice through the following:**

- **General Practice**
- **Occupational Health Services (OHS)**
- **A Community Pharmacy**

**Whilst adjustments can and should be made, women must be supported to take time off if needed.**

## 2. Workplace Adjustments

Workplace adjustments are changes made to a working environment, conditions, working styles, or practice to help staff in the workplace. Employers should consider which workplace adjustments might be appropriate for the individual and their work environment. Workplace assessments should be person-centred and reflect the specific needs of women with menopause or menstrual health related symptoms. Simple changes to someone's role or working environment can help ensure that these symptoms do not become a barrier to working comfortably.

## 3. Menopause, Menstrual Health and the Law

Employers have legal duties to be aware of in relation to making workplace adjustments for menopause and menstrual health. Two main strands of law may relate to menopause and menstrual health.

### 3.1 - Equality Act (2010)

Menopause and menstrual health are not specifically protected under the Equality Act. However, under the Act, employers have a duty not to discriminate in terms of age, sex, and disability. A member of staff's menopause or menstrual health related symptoms could be regarded as a disability by an employment tribunal. If a staff member is treated unfairly because of their menopause or menstrual health related symptoms, this may amount to direct or indirect discrimination because of their sex, a disability, or their age.

You are considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

[Read more about the Equality Act 2010.](#)

Examples of direct or indirect discrimination may include:

- Unfair treatment of staff who may be going through the perimenopause or menopause.
- If an employer treats menopause or menstrual health related symptoms less seriously than a male worker's health condition when considering a drop in job performance.
- Unwanted comments, jokes, banter, or ridicule about a woman's symptoms could amount to harassment or sexual harassment, depending on the nature of the unwanted behaviour.

If a member of staff has a disability, an employer must consider making changes to reduce or remove any disadvantages the staff member experiences because of it, if they are reasonable. Reasonable adjustments are changes to remove barriers that may be discriminatory against a member of staff under the Equality Act. Your employer may have a policy or guidance on reasonable adjustments.

## 3.2 - Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)

Employers also have a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act. The Act states that an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure their staff's health, safety, and welfare at work. This includes assessing any specific risks and making reasonable adjustments for women with menopause or menstrual health related symptoms.

Workplace and reasonable adjustments provide a positive and inclusive environment allowing women and people who menstruate to continue working comfortably and to their full potential.

[Read more about the Health and Safety at Work Act \(1974\).](#)

## 4. Menstrual Health

There are a variety of practical steps that can be taken to support women and help minimise the impact of some of the more common menstrual health symptoms. Some women will have a diagnosis of a particular condition and some will not. It should be noted that menstrual health symptoms can be disruptive even if a person does not have a specific condition.

Menstrual health symptoms can fluctuate during the cycle, may be short term, and can vary from month to month. Adjustments should be reviewed regularly so that the staff member can continue to work to the best of their ability and contribute positively to the working environment. Their needs may change depending on the nature and severity of their symptoms. It is important to reassure your staff member that any adjustments put in place will not have a detrimental effect on performance reviews or markings.

This list is not exhaustive and not everyone will have all the symptoms listed and some may have other symptoms not listed. **It is recognised that not all suggestions will be practical, appropriate or possible in all working environments.** Further sources of information and support are provided on [NHS Inform](#) Women's Health Platform and the [Menopause and Menstrual Health: Guidance for Employers](#) resources.

## 4.1 - Heavy bleeding

- Provide easy access to washroom and toilet facilities including, where possible, self-contained cubicles with wash basins inside the cubicle.
- Allow for more frequent short breaks to go to the toilet.
- Make sanitary products available in washrooms.
- Make sure sanitary bins are provided and emptied regularly.
- If practical, allow someone to temporarily work from home if they have very heavy bleeding.
- If working from home is not practical, allow time as needed to manage symptoms of heavy bleeding.
- Make sure there is a short break between meetings to allow people time to go to the toilet if needed.
- Make it easy to request extra uniforms, if needed.
- Consider flexibility in uniform such as allowing those affected to wear dark clothing.
- Provide adequate space to store additional uniforms or change of clothing.
- Allow staff to change clothes if required.
- Provide areas, such as toilets, or changing rooms, where staff can go to change clothing.
- Allow staff to bring in extra clothing or uniforms in case they need to change.
- Consider a temporary change to duties.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.

## 4.2 - Dysmenorrhoea (painful periods)

- Allow easy access to staff's own pain medication and somewhere suitable to store this.
- Allow staff to take their own medication and take short breaks to rest or go for a walk if movement helps with pain.
- Allow people to use hot water bottles or TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) machines where practical to help manage pain.
- Consider a temporary change to duties.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.
- For staff not working on shift patterns, consider allowing a flexible working arrangement. For example a later start and finish time if they have had to take painkillers in the morning or have not slept well due to pain.
- If practical, allow someone to work from home to make it easier to manage pain.

### 4.3 - Sleep disruption

- Consider a temporary change to duties.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.
- For staff not working on shift patterns, consider allowing a flexible working arrangement. For example a later start and finish time.
- If practical, allow them to work from home to help manage effects of lack of sleep.
- Share or signpost to resources that can support and advise on how to sleep better which can be accessed via the [Menopause and Menstrual Health: Guidance for Employers](#) resources.

### 4.4 - Migraine or headache and nausea

- Consider a temporary adjustment to someone's work duties.
- Provide a quiet area to work or, if practical, allow staff in open plan offices to wear noise cancelling headphones to block out background noise.
- Allow easy access to drinking water.
- Allow easy access to staff's own pain medication and somewhere suitable to store this.
- Allow staff to take their own medication or take short breaks to rest if helpful.
- Consider allowing staff to work in a darkened room to avoid glare from overhead lights that may cause migraine or headache and nausea.
- Install reflective screens on windows to deflect the light and installing window blinds should be given consideration.

### 4.5 - Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) or Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)

- As recommended by the Health and Safety Executive, address work-related stress by carrying out a [Stress Risk Assessment](#).
- Consider allowing the member of staff to work from home.
- Allow short breaks for staff to do breathing exercises, meditation, relaxation exercises, go for a walk.
- Provide access to a quiet or private space to facilitate the above.
- Signpost to internal or external sources of support, or both. General support can be found on the [Information and Resources](#) page.
- Encourage regular planned leave to help reduce stress.
- Discuss whether it would be helpful for the member of staff to visit their General Practice or Community Pharmacy, if they have not already.

## 5. Menopause

There are a variety of practical steps that can be taken to support women and to help minimise the impact of some of the more common menopause symptoms. They can be long lasting and can change over time. For this reason, adjustments should be regularly reviewed as the needs of the individual change depending on the nature and severity of their symptoms. It will help them to continue to work to the best of their ability and contribute positively to the working environment. It is important to reassure your member of staff that any adjustments put in place will not have a detrimental effect on performance reviews or marking.

This list is not exhaustive. Not everyone will have all the symptoms listed and some may have other symptoms not listed. **It is recognised that not all suggestions will be practical, appropriate or possible in all working environments.** Further sources of information and support are provided on [NHS Inform Women's Health Platform](#) and the [Menopause and Menstrual Health: Guidance for Employers](#).

### 5.1 - Hot flushes and daytime sweats

- Look at ways to adjust temperature in the working environment. For example provide a fan, move a desk close to a window or away from a radiator, or adjust the air conditioning.
- For colleagues who work in the community rather than in a single location, consider the use of neck or handheld fans.
- Provide easy access to drinking water and washrooms.
- Avoid tight fitting uniforms and look at how they can be adjusted to the individual's needs. For example using lighter weight, more breathable materials, whilst also adhering to any uniform standards your employer has.
- Make it easier to request extra uniforms if needed.
- Provide adequate space to store additional uniforms or change of clothing.
- Allow staff to change clothes if required.
- Provide areas, such as toilets or changing rooms, where staff can go to change clothing.
- Allow staff to bring in extra clothing or uniforms in case they need to change.
- For staff not required to wear uniforms, suggest loose fitting layers and cotton/natural materials rather than synthetic.
- Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks, where safe and practical.
- Allow people time to manage severe hot flushes and provide access to quiet or private spaces to facilitate this.

## 5.2 - Sleep disruption and night sweats

- Consider a temporary change to duties.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.
- For staff not working on shift patterns, consider allowing a flexible working arrangement, for example a later start and finish time.
- If practical, allow them to work from home to help manage the effects of lack of sleep.
- Share or signpost [Information and Resources](#) that can support and advise on how to sleep better.

## 5.3 - Difficulty concentrating and memory problems

- If possible, provide quiet spaces to work which may help with concentration.
- If practical, allow the option to work from home if helpful to the individual.
- Consider a temporary change to duties.
- Consider adjustments to workload, allocation of tasks and deadlines that are proving challenging or exacerbating symptoms, in consultation with the staff member so they are still enabled to deliver tasks that are important.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts if concentration is better at certain times of the day.
- For staff not working on shift patterns, consider allowing a flexible working arrangement to accommodate differences in concentration at different times of the day.
- Utilising memory aids such as notebooks or project management tools on Microsoft Office.

## 5.4 - Headaches and fatigue

- Consider a temporary change to duties.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.
- For staff not working on shift patterns, consider allowing a flexible working arrangement, for example a later start and finish time to help manage fatigue.
- If practical, allow them to work from home.
- Provide a quiet area to work or, if practical, allow staff in open plan offices to wear noise cancelling headphones to block out background noise.
- Allow easy access to drinking water.



- Allow easy access to staff's own pain medication and somewhere suitable to store this.
- Allow staff to take their own medication, take short breaks to rest or get fresh air if helpful.
- Consider allowing staff to work in a darkened room to avoid glare from overhead lights that may cause migraine or headache and nausea.
- Install reflective screens on windows to deflect the light and installing window blinds should be given consideration.

## 5.5 - Depression, stress, anxiety and loss of confidence

- As recommended by the Health and Safety Executive, address work-related stress by carrying out a [Stress Risk Assessment](#).
- If practical, allow the option to work from home if helpful to the individual.
- Consider a temporary change to duties.
- Consider adjustments to workload, allocation of tasks and deadlines that are proving challenging or exacerbating symptoms, in consultation with the staff member so they are still enabled to deliver tasks that are important to them.
- Consider protected time to allow them to catch up with work.
- Set small realistic goals to help obtain a sense of achievement.
- Allow short breaks for staff to do breathing exercises, meditation, relaxation exercises, go for a walk.
- Provide access to a quiet or private space to facilitate the above.
- Encourage regular planned leave to help reduce stress.
- Provide the opportunity to openly discuss any concerns or difficulties, either with their line manager, a trusted senior colleague, or trade union representative.
- If appropriate, consider offering a referral to OHS, if your employer provides this service.
- Signpost to internal or external sources of support or both, including self-help books and literature on the subject. General support can be found on the [Information and Resources](#) page.
- Discuss whether it would be helpful for the member of staff to visit their General Practice or Community Pharmacy, if they have not already.
- If appropriate, consider psychological interventions. Your employer may provide local staff psychology services that could be utilised. This may include use of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) programmes.

## 5.6 - Muscular aches, and bone and joint pain

- Consider a temporary change or adjustment to duties.
- If appropriate, review manual handling tasks and make any necessary adjustments such as lighter duties or providing lifting equipment.
- Review work schedules and tasks and consider temporary adjustments or modifications if possible.
- Allow staff to take their own medication, take short breaks for rest or go for a walk if helpful.

You can find further information on the National Wellbeing Hub website:

[www.nationalwellbeinghub.scot](http://www.nationalwellbeinghub.scot)