



Heroes of 'safe and well'

# Let's talk about the menopause

Manager's guidance

At Carnival UK, we're passionate about creating a great place to work and keeping all our people safe and well. This means supporting our people to do their best, and be at their best, while at work.

We pride ourselves on our flexible working and inclusion agenda, making our company an open and transparent place to work. As part of this, we want to raise awareness of the effects of menopause and its impact in the workplace, looking at ways we can support our colleagues.

We want menopause to be talked about openly and without embarrassment.

Menopause is a natural part of life and it isn't always an easy transition for all, but with the right support, it can be much better. While not everyone suffers from symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work and in their personal lives.

The changing age of the workforce means that more menopausal people are in work. Research shows that the majority may be reluctant to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager or ask for the support or any adjustments to their working arrangements that they may need. We want to change that.

Menopause isn't just an issue for those with symptoms, people who don't have symptoms need to know about it too, so they can support colleagues, friends and family.

This guide is to explain more about menopause, to encourage open conversations about it and to help you understand what support we can offer to our employees throughout the different stages of menopause.

## What is menopause?

**Menopause** is defined as a biological stage in a person's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and reach the end of their natural reproductive life. Usually it is defined as having occurred when a person has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for people reaching menopause naturally). Most people experience menopause between the ages of 45 and 55 years, either naturally or due to surgery or illness.

**Perimenopause** is the time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, e.g. irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can start years before menopause.

**Postmenopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a person has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

## What are the symptoms?

Every person is different. Not everyone will experience every symptom and some may not notice any at all. However, three out of four will, and one in four could experience severe symptoms. Often symptoms last between four to eight years, but they can continue for longer.

Symptoms can be both physical and psychological, including hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, headaches or worsening migraines, poor concentration or memory problems, depression, anxiety, panic attacks and mood changes, weight and skin changes, urinary infections, muscle and joint pain.

## Managing symptoms

There are a number of ways to manage any symptoms, from the medical approach to natural approaches including dietary and lifestyle changes.

We never offer advice to our employees about the type of treatment that's right for them. If anyone in your team asks you for advice, please recommend they make an appointment to see their GP, as they will be able to recommend what's right based on their individual medical history and personal preference.

Please see Appendix 1 at the end of this document for guidance on how to suggest individuals can get the best from their GP appointment.

## Talking to your team members

Never assume that because a person is of menopausal age that this will be affecting them at work. If you feel a member of your team needs support then you can have a conversation about what they're experiencing and how we can help. Don't forget you can contact our Menopause support network and Champion for more information.

If a member of your team wants to talk about menopause – or to just talk about how they are feeling, as they may not know if they have menopausal symptoms – please make sure you:

- Arrange an appropriate time to meet, allowing enough time for the conversation
- Find a room that will keep your conversation confidential
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- Ask general questions, but let them lead the conversation (let them tell you what symptoms they might be experiencing, avoid making assumptions)
- Explore the best ways they can be supported (see below)
- Agree on any actions or adjustments to their working arrangements that might reduce the difficulties menopause can cause at work/alleviate their symptoms and how to implement them
- Arrange a follow-up meeting if needed.

If you feel they need further help or support, you could consider referring them to the Employee Assistance Programme or the Occupational Health team.

Any information provided to you about a person's health must be handled confidentially and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

## Assessing any reasonable adjustments

Adjustments to working arrangements that may help should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Many will be simple and won't involve any cost, and may vary in the time they are needed for.

During your meeting, discuss with your team member what their symptoms are, how they're affecting them at work, what they're doing to manage their symptoms and how we can help.

Try not to make any assumptions in advance, be prepared to listen and be open to ideas, with a clear understanding of how this will work for the business as well as for the individual.

Remember that symptoms vary both in their nature and how long they last for.

**Here are some (non-exhaustive) ideas of the sorts of adjustments that you may want to consider to help your team member:**

<b>Hot flushes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temperature control for their work area. This could include offering a desk fan.</li> <li>• Permanent access to fresh drinking water.</li> <li>• Access to a quiet room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush.</li> </ul>
<b>Heavy periods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent access to washroom facilities.</li> <li>• Make sure sanitary protection is available in toilets.</li> <li>• Consider flexible working arrangements or options for working from home.</li> </ul>
<b>Headaches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have access to fresh drinking water.</li> <li>• Consider if there's a quieter space to work.</li> <li>• Have time out to take medication if needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Difficulty sleeping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider our flexible working policy or informal arrangements to arrive later for work.</li> <li>• Consider if working from home is an option.</li> </ul>
<b>Low mood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct them to the Employee Assistance Programme, for confidential counselling and advice.</li> <li>• Regular one-to-one discussions.</li> </ul>
<b>Loss of confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular one-to-one discussions.</li> <li>• Have protected time to catch up with work.</li> <li>• Consider mentoring if appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Poor concentration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust working hours to fit times of the day when concentration is better.</li> <li>• Review task allocation and workload.</li> <li>• Provide list books, note board or other memory-assisting equipment.</li> <li>• Offer quieter space to work.</li> <li>• Reduce interruptions if possible.</li> <li>• Have protected time to catch up with work.</li> </ul>
<b>Anxiety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct them to the Employee Assistance Programme, for confidential counselling and advice.</li> <li>• Regular one-to-one discussions.</li> </ul>
<b>Panic attacks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree time out, if required, there are quiet rooms available.</li> </ul>

## Review how the adjustments are working and if they're still needed

After the adjustments have been agreed and put into place, it's important to monitor their effectiveness and agree a time for a follow-up meeting to discuss. It may be necessary to change the adjustments, or they may only be needed in the short term.

Keep notes of all your discussions, including what you've both agreed to do as a result, whether a particular adjustment is temporary (in which case the period for which it will be in place subject to further review) or permanent and any necessary follow-ups. Keep these conversations and agreements confidential unless the colleague involved chooses to disclose them to other colleagues. To the extent it is necessary for colleagues to be aware of a team member's symptoms and/or any adjustments being made you should discuss what colleagues will be told, who will be told and who will tell them.

## More information

Please talk to or refer your team member to the Occupational Health team if you need any more information or advice. You can also contact our Menopause support network and Champion for more information.

## Below are some useful numbers and links relating to support services and information about menopause.

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. These explain how a GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information>
- National Health Services. This provides an overview of menopause. <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- Menopause information. This provides an overview of menopause. <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>
- Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). POI information and support on early menopause. <https://www.daisynetwork.org/>
- Information on hysterectomy. This provides an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy. [About Hysterectomy.org](#)
- Henpicked. This provides information on managing menopause and an insight into women's stories. <https://henpicked.net/menopause/>

## Appendix 1

Below is some useful guidance for individuals on how to get the best from conversations with their GP.

### How to talk to your GP about menopause

If you're suffering from menopausal symptoms to the point they're getting in the way of you enjoying life, it's time to talk to your doctor.

But sometimes that's easier said than done. We all know how difficult it can often be just to get an appointment, and then it's often only ten minutes. And talking about symptoms can be hard, let alone if you feel rushed or unprepared.

So, what can you do? We've put together some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

**Don't wait.** It's all too common for people to feel they must simply 'put up' with menopausal symptoms as a part of life, but if they are affecting you then there are things you can do and support is available. There's no need to wait until symptoms feel unbearable.

**Read the NICE guidelines.** This stands for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and these guidelines are what your doctor will use to determine the type of conversations to have with you and treatments to offer. There are guidelines for patients, which are really useful to read before you see your GP so you know what to expect.

**Prepare for your appointment.** It's easier for your doctor to understand what's going on if you provide them with all the information. That may sound obvious, but blood tests to say where you are on the menopause transition aren't always available or accurate – your hormones can fluctuate daily during this time. So your doctor will be thinking about what to recommend for you based on your symptoms.

**Keep a list of your symptoms,** your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you're feeling, and any changes you've noticed. Write them down and take them to your appointment. Your doctor will thank you for it and it's more likely that together you'll find the right solution faster. And, if you have any preferences about how you manage your symptoms tell them that too e.g. if you'd like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or not.

**Ask the receptionist which doctor** is best to talk to about menopause. They are often the font of all knowledge at a surgery and can help you find the best person to speak to – it might not be your usual GP, it could be someone who has had special training in the subject.

**Ask for a longer appointment.** If you don't think your standard appointment will be long enough then see if you can book a double appointment. Some surgeries do.

**Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion.** If you don't feel you've received the help you need, ask to speak to someone else. Don't be put off, you know how you're feeling and how it's affecting you.

**Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area.** Occasionally, there are regional clinics specifically devoted to menopause. If there is one in your area and you think this would be helpful, ask for a referral.

**Take your partner or a friend with you.** The chances are you spend your life supporting others and during menopause, it's your turn to ask them for support. Your partner or a friend will know how the symptoms are affecting you, they could support you at the appointment and also find out how they can continue supporting you.

## What to expect from your doctor

There are certain things a GP should – and should not – do during your appointment.

### They should:

- Talk to you about your lifestyle and how to manage both your symptoms and your longer-term health.
- Offer advice on hormone replacement therapy and other non-medical options. Talk to you about the safety and effectiveness of any treatment.

### They should not:

- Tell you that it's just that time of your life. Yes, menopause is a natural stage but please don't feel that means you should have to put up with every symptom without help.
- Tell you they don't prescribe HRT. It's up to you what you want to try and for them to say whether it could be right for you, depending on your medical history.
- Impose unnecessary time restrictions e.g. they'll only prescribe this once or for a year or two. This is an ongoing conversation and if your symptoms persist, you'll still need help to manage them.

**Remember, your GP is there to help and support you, and you should feel comfortable and confident in talking to them about your symptoms and help you need. Don't think you have to struggle through menopause when there is help and support available.**