

ADVICE NOTE

Information & advice for members of the
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association



AGING IN THE WORKPLACE

Women - Menopause

What Is It?

The menopause is when a woman stops menstruating and is no longer able to get pregnant naturally.

Periods usually start to become less frequent over a period of time that can range from a number of months to a few years before they stop altogether. Sometimes they can stop suddenly.

The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a women's oestrogen levels decline. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51.

Around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.

Surgical and medical treatments, such as hysterectomy, fertility treatment, endometriosis and hormone therapy as part of someone's transition to a true gender can bring about menopause symptoms.

Symptoms of the Menopause

Around 80 percent of women experience noticeable symptoms of the menopause, and

of these, 45 percent find their symptoms difficult to deal with.

The changes in the menopause transition (peri-menopause) include irregular menstrual patterns, hot flushes, night sweats, headaches, mood swings, vaginal dryness, loss of libido, forgetfulness, difficulty sleeping, tearfulness and fatigue.

Every women's experience of menopause is different but a survey by the TUC shows some of the most common symptoms, which can affect the workplace include:-

- Hot flushes (58%)
- Headaches (46%)
- Tiredness and lack of energy (39%)
- Anxiety attacks (33%)
- Aches and pains (30%)
- Dry skin and eye (29%)

What to Consider

- Consult your GP on managing the menopause – ensure the symptoms are not the result of anything else.
- Seek support with a trusted line manager, if you feel unable to do this, speak with Occupational Health about your symptoms and obtain advice of what changes can be made in your workplace.

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AGING IN THE WORKPLACE CONTINUED...

How to Support a Woman through the Menopause

Be a supportive line manager. All line managers should have appropriate training. Allow plenty of time to have the conversation. Ensure this takes place in a private room where you will not be disturbed. Encourage them to speak openly about their experiences. All support measures should be recorded, and securely stored. Ensure adequate measures are put in place and be sure to check up regularly.

Reasonable adjustments to workplace

- Flexible working environment.
- Quiet rest spaces. Take time to rest if possible.
- Adequate water supplies.
- Temperature controlled workspace. A room or desk fan could help.
- Easy access to toilet/changing facilities.
- Access to counselling services as required.
- Ensuring appropriate workload.

Useful Links

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- https://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Womens_Experience_of_Working_through_the_Menopause-Dec_2010.pdf
- https://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Work_and_the_Menopause-A_Guide_for_Managers.pdf
- <http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/after-life/menopause/topics>
- <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/>
- <https://henpicked.net/>

Men – Prostate

The prostate is a small gland found only in men. It surrounds the tube that carries urine out of the body (urethra).

The prostate gland is about the size and shape of a walnut but tends to get bigger as you get older. It can sometimes become swollen or enlarged by conditions such as:

- Prostate enlargement
- Prostatitis
- Prostate cancer.

Symptoms of Prostate Problems

Your prostate surrounds your urethra – this means that problems with your prostate are likely to affect the way you urinate.

Symptoms vary, but you may:

- find it difficult to urinate, for example straining or taking a long time
- notice a weak flow of urine
- feel that your bladder has not emptied fully
- keep dribbling urine after you've finished
- have a sudden urge or frequent need to pee
- keep getting up at night to pee

If you have these symptoms and you're concerned about them, discuss them with your GP.

In men, the most common cause of these symptoms is an enlarged prostate, which can block the flow of urine.

Simple measures such as reducing the amount you drink (especially caffeinated drinks, fizzy drinks, and alcohol) before bed can sometimes help control the symptoms. There are also medications to help reduce the size of the prostate. With more severe problems, the size of the prostate can be surgically reduced.



AGING IN THE WORKPLACE CONTINUED...

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men in the UK. It is often slow growing, so symptoms may not be noticed for years. It mainly affects men over 65, although 20% of cases are in men younger than this. The risk of developing prostate cancer is increased depending on your:

- ethnic group – prostate cancer is more common among men of Afro-Caribbean and African descent than in other ethnic groups.
- Family history – having a brother or father who developed prostate cancer under the age of 60 seems to increase your likelihood of developing it. In addition, having a close female relative who developed breast cancer may also increase the risk of getting prostate cancer.

The symptoms of prostate cancer can be difficult to distinguish from an enlarged prostate. The main additional symptom being blood either in the urine or semen.

Useful Links

- <https://prostatecanceruk.org/prostate-information/about-prostate-cancer/prostate-cancer-symptoms>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/prostate-enlargement/>
- <https://www.prostatescotland.org.uk/>

Caring Responsibilities

Teachers in the “sandwich generation” now feel more stress than any other age group as they are balancing the demanding acts of caring for growing children and their aging parents. The Office for National Statistics has reported that almost 27% of sandwich carers show symptoms of mental ill-health (including anxiety and depression) while undertaking these responsibilities. This is 5% more than in the population in general. The more hours spent on such tasks, the more likely the mental ill-health issues will be.

The 2010 Equality Act states that a worker cannot be treated less favourably than anyone else because of these caring duties. While the majority of sandwich carers are able to balance their job and caring responsibilities, employers must consider flexible working arrangements upon request. This could mean a change of hours, or remitting a promoted post.

Useful Links

- <http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/ci/fattach/get/585/1354033248/redirect/1/session/L2F2LzEvdGltZS8xNjAzOTgzMTQ4L3NpZC9WUTJjb0lXbw==/filename/carers.pdf>