

**NHS Employers**

**Menopause and the  
workplace**

**16<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

# NHS Employers Health and Wellbeing team

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- NHS Employers Covid-19 Guidance
- Monthly mailing
- Network conversations
- Working Groups
- Twitter

# Why is this important?

- 3.5 million women over the age of 50 in the workplace.
- Just under 1 million women working in the NHS (960,000) compared to 287,000 men.
- In the UK, the average age for a woman to go through menopause is 51.
- Around one in 100 women experience menopause before age 40.
- 3 out of 4 women experience symptoms, 1 in 4 could experience serious symptoms.



# What are the NHS doing?

## **Sherwood Forest Hospital Foundation Trust**

- developed and implement a menopause strategy
- educated their staff
- raised awareness
- easier to disclose menopause related health problems

## **Norfolk Community Health & Care NHS Trust**

- introduced the Menopause Guide and Facilities Map
- increased awareness of women-specific health matters amongst all staff
- implemented revised Uniform & Dress Code Policy



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## Menopause and the workplace

29/10/2019 00:00:00

The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age as a woman's estrogen levels decline.

Studies have shown that menopause symptoms can have a significant impact on attendance and performance in the workplace.

With our population now living longer, working longer, and with so many women working in the NHS, it's vital that staff are supported to



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## Menopause and the workplace webinar

18 / 10 / 2019

Catch up on our latest menopause and the workplace webinar. On 10 October 2019 we held an hour webinar which focused on how to support colleagues with menopause in the workplace.

The webinar featured Suzanne Banks, chief nurse from Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Alex Watson, HR business partner and health and wellbeing lead from Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust who both shared how they support menopause at work. The webinar will give you more information on:

- the importance of getting senior buy in to drive the agenda forward
- how you can use your data and age profile in your organisation to drive the agenda

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# Menopause at work

March 2020

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## Tackling the menopause taboo in the workplace

18/10/2019 00:00:00

Karen Wright, associate director of workforce for Velindre University NHS Trust, Wales shares her experience of working whilst experiencing the menopause and talks about the steps she took to challenge the taboo in her organisation.



My past workplace experiences of menopause were that it was a female issue and a topic to be avoided at all costs, joked about or talked about in hushed tones. The word menopause appeared to cause embarrassment and discomfort among managers and staff alike. Consequently, nothing was being done to support staff who were being affected, including their partners, husbands and colleagues. When I started to go through the menopause I realised that staff did

**COVID-19**  
guidance for the NHS workforce community  
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# Why is the menopause relevant to our organisation and how do we maximise wellbeing at work?

**Jacqui McBurnie**

Senior Programme manager, NHS England/Improvement

Chair of the NHS England Menopause Network

2020

NHS England and NHS Improvement



# Menopause definition

**Menopause:** A biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The changes associated with menopause occur when the ovaries stop maturing eggs and secreting oestrogen and progesterone.

**Perimenopause** The time in which a woman has irregular cycles of ovulation and menstruation leading up to menopause and continuing until 12 months after her final period. The perimenopause is also known as the menopausal transition or climacteric.

**Postmenopause** The time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/chapter/Recommendations#diagnosis-of-perimenopause-and-menopause>

# How is menopause understood?

**Without knowledge or training, menopause is usually assumed as follows;**

- Applies to mature/old ladies having several 'hot flushes' a day
- Grumpiness
- Moodiness
- 'Change'



# Why is this important?

- The affected cohort of staff will not reduce, diminish or change to any great extent in future years
- The **female employment rate of 71.4%, is the highest it has been since comparable records began in 1971.**
- In the **NHS nearly 50% of the working population are women between 45 and 64 years** old
- **Women outnumber men in 40-49 and 50-59 age groups**
- More of your senior team will be women
- 79% of jobs in the health and social work sector and 70% of jobs in education are held by women.
- The issue crosses age and gender disability aspects; transgender population also needs to be recognised. **Any of our colleagues who identify as male (born with ovaries) will experience a menopause.** Support of this group of staff can be particularly difficult and challenging in an organisation where the culture does not support open conversations and awareness and where **training and education is not formally established.**

(ONS. 2019)

# Why is this important?

Should we expect a nationally-led strategy akin to the recruitment campaign to redress the balance, to underline the value we place on our experienced cohort of staff, to hold services firm as we attempt to secure new recruits?

- There is an **increased need for informal care**, and **a need for older people to stay in the workforce longer**. People will need to ensure they have adequate funds to support their longer lives. There is also a policy drive to increase employment among older people, to help support the increased costs of providing health and social care services and State Pension provision that an ageing population brings.
- Almost **one in four (24%) female workers also juggle caring responsibilities**.
- The NHS reports **around 100,000 staff vacancies, approx 38,000 of which are nursing gaps**
- **Staff turnover** is huge and costs organisations to replace experience lost
- Data also shows that many qualified nurses having been recruited from the EU are turning away from the NHS. We can see that the largest groups affected are nurses with an 8.5% reduction and midwives reduced by over 3% since 2016
- We have the complexities of leaving the EU and a changed immigration system

# NHSE/I Age band by region;



| Directorate                            | <=20<br>Years | 21-<br>25  | 26-<br>30  | 31-<br>35   | 36-<br>40   | 41-<br>45   | 46-<br>50   | 51-<br>55   | 56-<br>60   | 61-<br>65  | 66-<br>70 | Unspecifi<br>ed | >=71<br>Years | Grand<br>Total |
|--|---------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Chair and Chief Executive's Office     | 0             | 0          | 2          | 5           | 5           | 0           | 1           | 4           | 6           | 5          | 0         | 0               | 1             | 29             |
| Chief Operating Officer                | 3             | 38         | 110        | 143         | 145         | 127         | 90          | 88          | 57          | 19         | 2         | 17              | 3             | 842            |
| Commercial                             | 0             | 2          | 2          | 4           | 6           | 13          | 17          | 17          | 10          | 6          | 0         | 1               | 0             | 78             |
| Emergency & Elective Care              | 0             | 2          | 11         | 17          | 18          | 19          | 11          | 11          | 14          | 1          | 0         | 2               | 0             | 106            |
| Finance                                | 0             | 27         | 67         | 135         | 156         | 130         | 142         | 113         | 87          | 28         | 1         | 13              | 0             | 899            |
| Health Service Investigation Branch    | 0             | 0          | 10         | 16          | 38          | 30          | 54          | 38          | 39          | 11         | 2         | 0               | 0             | 238            |
| Improvement                            | 0             | 12         | 35         | 70          | 83          | 68          | 82          | 74          | 51          | 19         | 6         | 7               | 0             | 507            |
| Medical                                | 0             | 1          | 16         | 35          | 37          | 31          | 31          | 40          | 36          | 16         | 0         | 2               | 1             | 246            |
| NHSX                                   | 0             | 3          | 15         | 19          | 35          | 34          | 26          | 35          | 12          | 13         | 1         | 0               | 0             | 193            |
| Nursing                                | 0             | 5          | 14         | 41          | 31          | 31          | 39          | 43          | 34          | 8          | 0         | 3               | 2             | 251            |
| People                                 | 3             | 10         | 33         | 50          | 70          | 59          | 38          | 55          | 30          | 10         | 1         | 1               | 0             | 360            |
| Region - East of England               | 0             | 9          | 25         | 48          | 67          | 81          | 102         | 103         | 105         | 47         | 3         | 2               | 0             | 592            |
| Region - London                        | 3             | 9          | 41         | 73          | 92          | 70          | 89          | 91          | 70          | 33         | 9         | 2               | 2             | 584            |
| Region - Midlands                      | 1             | 9          | 26         | 51          | 83          | 94          | 137         | 115         | 64          | 30         | 6         | 6               | 1             | 623            |
| Region - North East & Yorkshire        | 1             | 12         | 43         | 56          | 91          | 101         | 134         | 154         | 106         | 32         | 7         | 1               | 2             | 740            |
| Region - North West                    | 0             | 8          | 25         | 40          | 88          | 67          | 79          | 99          | 77          | 24         | 6         | 0               | 1             | 514            |
| Region - South East                    | 0             | 4          | 12         | 24          | 46          | 63          | 60          | 71          | 75          | 31         | 10        | 4               | 1             | 401            |
| Region - South West                    | 1             | 13         | 25         | 48          | 79          | 73          | 112         | 115         | 102         | 35         | 4         | 1               | 0             | 608            |
| Strategy                               | 0             | 7          | 36         | 57          | 54          | 44          | 26          | 45          | 27          | 3          | 1         | 1               | 0             | 301            |
| Transformation & Corporate Development | 2             | 37         | 88         | 108         | 97          | 81          | 105         | 75          | 55          | 17         | 2         | 1               | 1             | 669            |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                     | <b>14</b>     | <b>208</b> | <b>636</b> | <b>1040</b> | <b>1321</b> | <b>1216</b> | <b>1375</b> | <b>1386</b> | <b>1057</b> | <b>388</b> | <b>61</b> | <b>64</b>       | <b>15</b>     | <b>8781</b>    |

**A great proportion of staff occupy the age bands which are more commonly affected by menopausal symptoms in the workplace**

# What did I do to increase and influence

- Secure senior champions – ensure lots of senior male managers are involved
- Learn how to use Twitter!
- Join up with Civil Service colleagues; we shared the building, so my reach and opportunity for learning was hugely significant
- Press for joint guidance and a Toolkit; I then volunteered to draft it to ensure progress was maintained
- Connect with colleagues and share news of the network through organisational communications, draw on Royal Colleges, Professional Agencies, Trades Unions
- Use World Menopause Day to initiate surveys – share results with HR and OD
- Access keynote speakers at events to work with me; British Menopause Society, Peppy Health
- Write articles that senior NHS leaders might read; Health Service Journal
- Accept invites to speaking events
- Challenge local and team thinking; this is a topic that is ‘up for discussion’

**Ps.....I have insomnia since menopause!!!!**

# How long does menopause last?



**As long as it takes.....there is no end date, so organisations need to cater for this as an ongoing factor of workforce wellbeing**

**Many of the organisational interventions to support are FREE; such as staff TRAINING**

- The top six symptoms affecting work: **Fatigue, hot flushes, concentration, anxiety, insomnia and recall/memory.**
  - Champion flexible working and regular breaks, especially if your team is working in a variety of bases, locations
- Remember that NOT ALL staff welcome the chance to work from home. However, there are workplace characteristics that make symptoms worse: High temperature, poor ventilation, humidity, no access to quiet or restful spaces, noise, dryness in the atmosphere and lack of natural light.
  - Identify quiet places to work if required; this helps concentration
  - Offer cold water stations; identify where these are for your teams working in the office
  - Encourage eating lunch away from the desk and outside if possible – advocate regular breaks

**Organisations are legally required, are they morally motivated?**

- It is important not to ignore the impact of menopausal symptoms at work or to simply regard them as “a women’s thing”. Similarly, workplace “banter” could be interpreted as harassment. To treat gender-specific health conditions differently could be interpreted as sex discrimination. The Equality Act 2010 protects against sex, age and disability discrimination and harassment.
- Some individuals will have lighter symptoms as they move from peri-menopause into menopause and post menopause
- Some individuals will continue to have symptoms between 4 and 12 years

# What support does the Menopause Network offer?



- The Menopause Network spans the whole of NHSE/I, there are **resources on the intranet**
- There are **dedicated 'Teams' pages with direct links** to external resources, peer to peer support and advice
- The network has developed a **formal 'Toolkit'** – this includes a dedicated space for individuals to map out symptoms and the frequency these are experienced. This can support personal knowledge and could also help with 1:2:1 conversations with colleagues
- We press for **greater awareness, champion conversations** about menopause and **provide evidence** that the workforce is adversely affected
- We have secured **Senior Director Champions and Menopause ambassadors** to create change in their team and offer greater support
- We can now capture sickness data; we report 'menopause related' sickness formally
- We have completed pilots with specific clinical services to explore what support is needed on top of our current Occ Health service offer

# Menopause Toolkit: Employee Passport



| Symptom                  | Location you have the symptom (if both tick both) |      | Severity of the symptom |     |         |        | How frequently do you experience the symptom |         |        |       |        |          | Adjustments you feel may assist (Examples included) |   |
|--------------------------|---|------|-------------------------|-----|---------|--------|--|---------|--------|-------|--------|----------|---|---|
|                          | Home  | Work | Mild                    | Mod | Intense | Severe | Less than monthly                            | Monthly | Weekly | Daily | Hourly | Constant |   |   |
| Hot flushes              |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Fan/ extra uniform/ close to a window/ access to showers.                 |
| Night Sweats             |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Flexible shift times  |
| Irregular Periods        |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Procedures allowing for staff to leave fixed positions                    |
| Loss of Libido           |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   |   |
| Vaginal Dryness          |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   |   |
| Mood Swings              |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Inform the rest of the shift to be mindful. Quiet/ Private breakout room. |
| Fatigue                  |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Flexible shift times.   |
| Hair Loss                |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Flexible uniform policy   |
| Sleep Disorders          |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   |   |
| Difficulty Concentrating |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Flexibility in breaks.  |
| Memory Lapses            |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Aide memoirs  |
| Dizziness                |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Access to fresh drinking water and quiet areas                            |
| Weight Gain              |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Access to food preparation facilities to allow healthy eating options     |
| Incontinence             |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Access to showers/extra uniform.  |
| Bloating                 |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   |   |
| Allergies                |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   |   |
| Brittle Nails            |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   |   |
| Changes in Odour         |   |      |                         |     |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |   | Access to showers/lockers to store toiletries/extra uniform               |

# Menopause Toolkit contd



| Symptom                  | Location you have the symptom (if both tick both) |      | Severity of the symptom |          |         |        | How frequently do you experience the symptom |         |        |       |        |          | Adjustments you feel may assist. (Examples included) |
|--------------------------|---|------|-------------------------|----------|---------|--------|--|---------|--------|-------|--------|----------|--|
|                          | Home  | Work | Mild                    | Moderate | Intense | Severe | Less than monthly                            | Monthly | weekly | Daily | Hourly | Constant |  |
| Irregular Heartbeat      |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Depression               |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Anxiety                  |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Irritability             |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Panic Disorder / Attacks |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Breast Pain              |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Headache                 |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          | Access to a private room                             |
| Joint Pain               |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Burning Tongue           |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Electric Shocks          |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Digestive Problems       |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Gum Problems             |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Muscle Tension           |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Itchy Skin               |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Tingling Extremities     |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |
| Osteoporosis             |   |      |                         |          |         |        |  |         |        |       |        |          |  |

**THANK YOU**



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