

Menopause in the Workplace: A Toolkit for Managers

Menopause in Context

As of March 2023, 20,376 of NHS Grampian employees are women, all of whom will experience the menopause at some stage. There are also currently over 5,705 women employees aged between 45 – 54, which is almost 28% of the NHS Grampian female workforce. For many women, menopause causes a great deal of stress, and being at work can make it worse. Although it is rarely discussed at work, the menopause is a natural stage of life that millions of women workers are either going through now or will experience in the future.

Symptoms of menopause include but are not limited to-

- Mood fluctuations and anxiety
- Aches and pains
- Tiredness
- Recurrent UTI symptoms
- Palpitations
- Hot flushes
- Brain fog and memory issues
- Insomnia, sleep disturbance and night sweats
- Lack of energy
- Heavy and/or unpredictable bleeding

[Click here](#) to watch the short Youtube video on menopause from the British Menopause Society-

The vast majority of women will experience one or more symptoms, but around a third experience severe symptoms that have a significant impact on their wellbeing. This is a workplace issue, with 25% of women likely to experience difficulties associated with menopausal symptoms at work.

Work conditions which can exacerbate menopause symptoms include-

- High temperatures in the workplace,
- A lack of ventilation,
- Inability to take regular breaks,
- Absence management processes penalising women who have higher absence rates due to Menopause symptoms, and
- Excessive work-related pressures, for example high workload or deadlines, causing stress.

Recommendations to develop a menopause-awareness workplace

Close the Gap, endorsed by the Scottish Government, have created a [Menopause Aware Workplace PDF](#) which outlines four key areas that your team need to focus on to develop a menopause-aware workplace.

- These are:
1. Awareness
 2. Support
 3. Policy
 4. Implementation

The remainder of this document will focus on resources you can use to develop these four areas in your workplace.

1. Awareness

Posters to display in your department

- [Menopause Facts Post](#)
- [Menopause Do & Don'ts Poster](#)

Training opportunities

[Menopause Awareness in the Workplace](#)

Learning outcomes

- Understand what the menopause is and how it can affect women's lives
- Outline why it is important to raise awareness of the menopause in the workplace
- Identify ways to support women at work who go through the menopause

Overview of menopause in the workplace

- [Why menopause at work- Why Now?](#)
- [What to expect when you are not expecting the menopause.](#)

2. Support for staff

Resources available-

[Menopause Matters](#)

[The Menopause Score Sheet](#) helps identify symptoms and aid discussion between staff member and manager.

[Menopause Balance](#)

[British Menopause Society](#)

[My healthy workplace](#)

[Experiencing peri/ menopause at work: Women's Stories](#)

Create Absence

Employee

Absence Type

SL - Sick leave

Absence Type Reason

Please Choose

SL Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illness

SL Asthma

SL Back problems

SL Benign and malignant tumours, cancers

SL Blood disorders

SL Burns, poisoning, frostbite, hypothermia

SL Chest & respiratory problems

SL Cold, cough, flu - influenza

SL Covid-related illness

SL Dental & oral problems

SL Ear, nose, throat (ENT)

SL Endocrine/glandular problems

SL Eye problems

SL Gastro-intestinal problems

SL Genitourinary & gynaecological disorders - exclude

SL Headache/migraine

SL Heart, cardiac & circulatory problems

SL Infectious diseases

SL Injury, fracture

SL Menopause

SL Nervous system disorders - exclude headache, n

SL Other known causes - not otherwise classified

Start Date and Time

End Date and Time

Return Interview

Pay Enhancements

Workplace Injury

Occupational Health Contacted

In September 2022, NHS Grampian were pleased to announce that Menopause is now a recognised reason for absence through SSTS as shown in the image to the left. This is in line with good practise recommended by The Creating a Menopause Awareness Workplace document from Close the Gap.

3. Policy

The interim Menopause Policy launched in October 2023 with the most recent update being released in January 2024 and can be accessed here: [Interim National Menopause and Menstrual Health Policy for NHS Scotland](#)

To inform the policy The University of Glasgow, in collaboration with the Scottish Government and the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland had invited all women or people who menstruate or experiences menopause and work for NHS Scotland to take part in our study exploring menstrual health and menopause at work.

In the interim NHS Grampian's Menopause focus group are following the balance menopause policy and guidance Balance - [Menopause Policy and Guidance](#)

For further information you can access the [Mental Health and Menopause Guidance here](#) through the National Wellbeing Hub

4. Implementation

Guidance

Creating-a-menopause-aware-workplace

Tools to aid conversation & adjustment to support a positive menopause at work

- Working through menopausal transition: A collaborative tool for line managers and employees
- Menopause-savvy conversations for line managers and supervisor
- 5-minute managers guide: Menopause and Reasonable Accommodation Practices
- 5-minute managers guide: Menopause-Related Absences

Implementation Guidance:

MANAGERS GUIDE TO UNIFORM

Options to Support Menopause

A National Uniform was developed to ensure clear role identification for NHS Scotland workforce. This standardised approach enables clear identification of staff roles for patients, members of the public and staff, displaying a clear message of professionalism and standard of care. With the National Uniform Policy developed to support and guide organisations in providing the correct colour coded uniform linked to professional role.

Page 6 of the National Policy CET 46

http://nhsgintranet.grampian.scot.nhs.uk/depts/FacilitiesandEstates/LaundryServices/NHSGDocuments/CEL2010_42.pdf displays a clear table for what colour staff groups are assigned:

Clinical Staff: The five shades of blue (cornflour, navy, ocean, Mediterranean or pale sky blue)

Non-clinical staff: Two shades of green (mid or dark green)

The majority of staff will be expected to wear a tunic however the alternate of a polo shirt is available as per section 8 on CEL 42 and section 3.1.4 on NHS Grampians dress policy.

Menopause is not classed as a disease or illness, therefore not covered under the medical condition policy. That said, two key Acts that cover staff going through menopause are the Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. With the Equality Act covering the three characteristics of age, sex and disability discrimination. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 ensures a safe working environment for employees. This extends into working conditions when a staff member may be experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Therefore as an employer it is our duty to consider reasonable adjustments to remove or minimise any disadvantage to those who may be experiencing menopausal symptoms. Staff should be given the option to switch their uniform tunic, if required, to reduce any adverse symptoms or effects from poor heat regulation during the menopause. As per point 3.1.5 on NHS Grampians Dress Policy staff who wear tunics or blouses are able to access polo shirts as alternative.

Please refer to the local dress policy for up to date guidance on all options of dress code.

Below is the advised guide on what steps should be taken when a member of staff has identified issues with their uniform:

Staff member experiences issues with heat regulation during menopause



Staff member to meet with manager to discuss issues



Manager to review national uniform policy and joint agreement to be met on trying alternative option to
tunic/blouse



Manager to sign off uniform request sheet, specifying polo shirt requirement and colour of shirt –
Please specify polo-shirt under 'other uniform' and what colour you require.



Staff member to visit Linen Services to place order.

Uniforms will only be issued if this form is fully completed and authorised

Date: Location: Tel No:

Full Name: Job Title: Ward/ Hospital :
(print)

Registered ☐ Unregistered ☐

Please try on the uniform sample/ sizing kits if available on site before ordering.

Please supply the above member of staff with the following:

Uniform Requirements:

	XS	S	M	L	XL	XXL	3XL
Tunics (number required)							
Trousers (number required)							
Other Uniform (please state)							
Inside leg measurement			Working days per week				

These uniforms are required for: New Staff ☐ Replacement ☐ Additional ☐
(Please tick one box)

Uniforms collected by: Signature:
(Print name)

Financial Code No:

Signed: Print:
(Manager)

Please email gram.sewingservices@nhs.scot or mail to the
Sewing Room, Linen Services Department, Foresterhill Laundry, Mile End Avenue

Notes:

1. Documents to be signed by Appointing Officer (new staff) or Ward Manager (all others)
2. Uniforms will only be issued if authorised above
3. Replacement uniform will only be issued on return of the old uniform
4. Uniform must be returned to the Sewing Room, irrespective of the condition, on termination of contract
5. Where staff transfer within NHS Grampian, they must take their existing uniform with them
6. Uniform is issued proportionate to the number of working days per week up to a maximum of 5 Tunics and 5 Trousers

For office use only – Uniform issued by:

	Tunics	Trousers	Others	Date
Uniforms issued				
Uniforms returned				
Uniforms repaired				

Foresterhill Sewing Room is located in the Laundry Building and is open
Monday to Thursday 8.00am -2.45pm, Friday 8.00am - 12:00pm and is closed on a Public Holidays
Tel No: 01224 553726

Due to Factory Act Children are not allowed in the building

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SUPPORT

For menopausal symptoms

Staff experiencing menopause symptoms which are impacting on their ability to work may self-refer or be referred to Occupational Health by their manager for advice and support. Early referral allows effective prioritisation and signposting to appropriate support services in order that individual employees can be given the best opportunity to either avoid an absence from work, or to facilitate their early return to work.

An occupational health practitioner [doctor or nurse advisor] will provide advice to the employee and where agreed with the employee, to their manager. Consideration may be given to the following as appropriate:

- A change to shift patterns
- A flexible working arrangement, for example a later start and finish time
- Consider the best time of the day to do certain activities based on energy levels
- Task rotation to allow for pacing, where possible breaking tasks which feel difficult down into smaller chunks, or alternating easier and harder activities.
- Hybrid/home working
- Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks (subject to Infection, Prevention and Control requirements)
- Access to cold drinking water and washrooms
- Allow for more frequent breaks
- A different uniform if experiencing hot flushes
- Moving to a cooler part of the office or asking for a fan if compliant with Infection, Prevention and Control requirements
- Address work-related stress by carrying out a stress risk assessment recommended by the HSE and advice on stress management techniques
- For those experiencing cognitive issues:
 - Provide a quiet area to work away from distractions for example away from doors, busy phones, loud machinery
 - Adjustments to tasks and duties that are proving a challenge
 - Additional training and/or 1:1 training for new tasks
 - Support with workload
 - Remind the person of important deadlines and review priorities regularly
 - Provide extra time to process information and/or complete tasks
 - Reduce screen time
 - Use of assistive technology e.g. reminders on phone; use of a Dictaphone to record meetings

The Occupational Physician will take a full medical history and complete the Green Climacteric Scale. The referral performance + Green Climacteric Scale are emailed directly to Consultant Gynaecologist Lead for menopause.