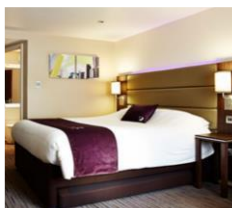




ZIP
by Premier Inn



Premier Inn



A Guide to supporting menopause in the workplace

October 2021

WHITBREAD

Why have we created this guide?

At Whitbread, our aim is to create an environment where everyone can be their true self at work. We want you to feel comfortable to speak about anything which may be impacting your ability to work, so that we can support you to carry out your daily role safely and comfortably. As part of this, Whitbread are committed to listening, and seeking to understand, with the aim to support reasonable adjustments and any required support where we can, to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Whilst it's important to recognise that for some, the menopause can be a positive experience of discovery, freedom, empowerment and rebalancing, studies have found that 80% of those going through this transition feel bothered, isolated and feel a loss of control. For some, the symptoms and impact of the transition can impact how they feel at work, both in terms of comfort and performance.

We have created this guide to raise the awareness of menopause related issues, and support anyone working for Whitbread who may be experiencing the menopause, with relevant information and support. Our aim is to create an environment where employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms, if they wish and to ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

This guide is also for those who want to support, for example, line managers, partners, (regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression), and colleagues. There is a line manager section in this guide, supporting our line managers who play a pivotal role in supporting the wellbeing of their team members.

As part of this guide, we are proud to work alongside both our Gender Equality network and our LGBTQ+ network, GLOW. We recognise our non-binary and trans team members as part of our approach to menopause, and acknowledge that not everyone who will be experiencing menopausal symptoms will identify as a woman. In particular, trans and non binary people might experience menopause slightly differently after transition. For this reason this guide will refer to 'people' rather than 'women'.

If English is not your first language and you would like support in an alternative language, please speak to Hospitality Action who can support in many languages.

Research has shown that 76% of working people with menopausal symptoms said they wanted better support from their employer with 45% even consider retiring or taking a break from work.

Section 1: What is the menopause?

The menopause is when a person stops having periods and will no longer get pregnant naturally. Periods usually start to become less frequent over a few months or years before they stop altogether. Sometimes they can stop suddenly.

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

Every person's experience is different, and it is important to note that people can experience early menopause, either naturally or as a result of surgery (such as a hysterectomy) or specific therapy (such as cancer treatment). In fact, research has found that around 1 in 100 people experience the menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency. Most people will experience menopausal symptoms, which can affect everyone's emotional and physical health differently.

Menopausal symptoms can begin months or even years before their periods stop and last around 4 years after their last period, although some people experience them for much longer. On average, the perimenopausal stage lasts around 7 years. This is where a person may experience common symptoms which can include:

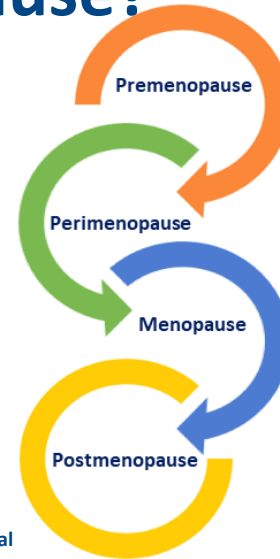
Physical

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Incontinence
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Skin changes (dryness, acne, itchiness)

- Headaches
- Heavy periods
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Dizziness
- Palpitations
- Change in weight
- Hair thinning
- Dry and itchy eyes

Cognitive & Psychological

- Difficulty sleeping
- Fatigue
- Low mood or anxiety
- Problems with memory or concentration
- Embarrassment
- Loss of confidence



This begins when a person starts their reproductive years when they have their first period, and their oestrogen levels are at their highest

As oestrogen levels begin to decline and fluctuate, this causes unpredictable periods. This can last several years where the individual can experience common symptoms

The end of their reproductive cycle where their ovaries will stop producing eggs and they will no longer conceive children naturally

The stage after menopause where oestrogen remains at a decreased level

***All medical information contained in this guide is based on up to date information available on the NHS website**

Some people do not need any assistance with the menopause and can go through this natural stage with no further requirement for medical or other interventions. For those less fortunate, there are a number of treatment options including Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), alternative medications, natural treatments as well as changing to a healthier lifestyle which can help. It is vital that those experiencing menopause are aware of the different treatments available and if unsure should speak to their GP.

In some circumstances the menopause can trigger a sense of loss and can have an impact on mental wellbeing. For some this can relate to their fertility ending which can be particularly difficult for those who were unable to have children or those who would have liked to have had more, whilst for others this relates more to their own identity and accepting how their body and energy may change as they get older.

On average, one in 10 of people will experience severe symptoms. While the Menopause is not recognised as a protected characteristic, it is possible that Menopause related health conditions are covered by the Equality Act. Further, if people experiencing the menopause, are subjected to poor or different treatment, they could potentially be covered under, for example Sex Discrimination.

Section 2: I'm experiencing the menopause. What support is there for me?

Menopause is still perceived as a private issue. Whilst discussing the transition into menopause might feel like a personal and difficult subject to be open about, there is plenty of support available for you.

Your Line Manager

We encourage you to reach out to your line manager and have a conversation about your symptoms, how you are feeling, and what adjustments would help you during this time.

If you don't feel comfortable speaking to your line manager, you could instead speak to a trusted colleague or an alternative manager.

Hospitality Action

There is free, confidential advice and support available via Hospitality Action

Free, confidential advice when you need it.

 **Phone**
0808 802 2111 (UK) / 1800 911 121 (Irl)

 **Online/Live Chat:**
hospitalityaction.well-online.co.uk

 **Email:**
assistance@hospitalityaction.org.uk

 **Well Online Portal:**
hospitalityaction.well-online.co.uk
Login details - Username: [hospitality](#) | Password: [wellbeing](#)

 **Speaking Out Hotline:**
0808 801 0351 (UK) / 1800 910 351 (Irl)

Mental Health First Aiders

Across the business, a number of colleagues are qualified in Mental Health First Aid, and available for you to connect with.

A list of Mental Health First Aiders is on the home page of the [Wellbeing Hub](#)

Additional Support

There are many external websites that can provide support and advice. There are links to these on the final page of this guide

Section 3: Guidance for Line Managers

It is important that as a line manager, you feel confident to speak sensitively to your team members about their general wellbeing including any health conditions, and feel comfortable to ask all team members about how their health and general wellbeing may be impacting their ability to do their role.

Those who are experiencing menopausal symptoms should get the same level of support and understanding as any other condition. However, for some, discussing the menopause is an intensely personal and difficult subject to be open about and can impact a person's confidence. This often means there is very little understanding amongst line managers and colleagues of the physical and emotional issues associated with menopause, and how these might affect someone at work.

If you notice that your team member could be struggling with symptoms, they may need you to start the conversation. Remember, it is the team member's decision as to whether they wish to disclose any health condition to you. It is also important that you do not assume what a team member may be experiencing or to "diagnose" their symptoms. By talking to them privately to ask how they are doing and whether they need any support, you may build trust and create an open space for the team member to talk to you. In order to help create this environment, you should:

- Avoid making any assumptions about their symptoms based on their age
- Avoid asking direct questions about the menopause and instead ask more open questions such as "how are you doing at the moment?" or "I've noticed you don't seem yourself, is everything okay?"
- Speak to the team member with empathy and the purpose of offering them support, and be open and willing to listen to them and what they are experiencing
- Remember that menopause should not be a 'taboo' issue. It is a health issue like any other, having some knowledge of menopausal symptoms and associated challenges will help support people who are experiencing difficulties at this time.

If a team member discloses that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms, this should be treated as confidential. As per the sickness policy, if you are to disclose their condition to anyone else then consent should be gained prior to this. You should discuss and agree with them who will be told and by whom, as well as the information they do or don't want shared with colleagues.

It's important that no matter what your team member is feeling or going through, they feel supported with both their physical and mental needs. Should your team member be experiencing any mental health related symptoms, you should facilitate an open two-way conversation with the team member to help establish what support they need. It may also be helpful to signpost your team member to the various resources available such as a Stress Risk Assessment, a Mental Health First Aider and Hospitality Action.

Section 4: What Workplace Adjustments are Available?

It is important to remember that work is good for health and maintaining wellbeing, and providing the necessary support and workplace adjustments to assist an individual to stay in work during this journey whilst medical advice is sought, can really help support their physical and mental wellbeing.

In your discussion with your team member, you may agree between you what adjustments could be put in place, using any medical evidence from their GP or Occupational Health to support you. The purpose of a workplace adjustment is to provide a supportive work environment by removing barriers, wherever possible, that get in the way of an individual doing their job.

Often a few simple changes to someone's working environment can be an extremely effective way to ensure your team member is able to continue performing and contributing to their full potential. If you aren't sure where to begin, you may find it helpful to complete a risk assessment with your team member to assess issues such as room temperature, ventilation and facilities.

If you are unsure what further adjustments need to be considered, you should contact [the Employee Relations team](#) to refer to Occupational Health, and follow the Sickness Policy.

Examples of Workplace Adjustments that could support an individual going through menopause are:

- considerations to lighting, ventilation and temperature control (for example provision of a fan, or seating in a cool space)
- use of flexible and agile working
- easy access to appropriate toilet facilities
- dress code – consideration to uniform may be a factor, e.g. a natural material like cotton is preferable to synthetic materials if the individual is experiencing hot flushes. There are roles where uniform is a H&S requirement and can not be changed. Additional uniforms to change into during the course of the day may be offered, if availability allows.
- review of the way their work is carried out/specific tasks, depending upon the role
- Use of flexible working - this can be helpful way to manage the impact of the menopause. You can find further details of this process in the Flexible Working Policy.
- Access to fresh water for regular hydration

Section 5: Andropause (often referred to as 'Male Menopause')

Some men, as they get older, experience hormone decreases, either through falling testosterone in their 30s and 40s, as well as other medical conditions that are more common in their 40s and 50s. This is commonly known as the 'male menopause' or 'andropause'. The symptoms are often assumed to be due to a sudden drop on testosterone, similar to the female menopause. This is not true, but there can be physical, emotional and cognitive symptoms that relate to testosterone deficiencies that occur in later life, including:

- Mood swings and irritability
- Hot flushes
- Decreased energy
- Depression
- Loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise
- Fat redistribution such as developing a large belly or breasts (gynaecomastia)
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Insomnia
- Poor concentration and short-term memory
- Loss of sex drive
- Erectile dysfunction

As with all elements of menopause, these symptoms can also affect trans and non binary people. Trans and non binary people might experience "male menopause" differently after transition.

As with the previous advice within this guide, line managers should consider a variety of approaches. This may include workplace adjustments, where a man identifies that he is suffering from symptoms, which impact his wellbeing and performance at work. Encouraging the team member to speak to their GP is important, alongside signposting the support services mentioned in the 'Support' section.

Section 6: Additional Support and Resources

Support for Whitbread Teams

Hospitality Action provides free, confidential advice and support

Free, confidential advice when you need it.



Phone
0808 802 2111 (UK) / 1800 911 121 (Irl)



Online/Live Chat:
hospitalityaction.well-online.co.uk



Email:
assistance@hospitalityaction.org.uk



Well Online Portal:
hospitalityaction.well-online.co.uk
Login details - Username: hospitality | Password: wellbeing



Speaking Out Hotline:
0808 801 0351 (UK) / 1800 910 351 (Irl)

For information and resources on general wellbeing and mental health support, you can access our Wellbeing Hub [here](#).

In addition, there are also many websites that offer additional support and information.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause/>

Over The Bloody Moon offer Menopause Masterclasses and a subscription to continuously updated resources:

<https://www.overthebloodymoon.com/>

Rock My Menopause offer helpful resources and encourage of community of ‘menovist’ (a person who openly encourages and engages in conversations around the menopause):

<https://rockmymenopause.com/>

Menopause Support is a charity promoting education on menopause and who created the #MakeMenopauseMatter campaign:

<https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>

Menopause Matters – provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options:

<https://menopausematters.co.uk>

Women’s Health Concern: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org>

International Menopause Society: <http://www.imsociety.org>

Daisy Network – provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency:

<https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>

The Hysterectomy Association: <https://hysterectomy-association.org.uk>

If you have any questions about this guide, please direct any queries to diversityandinclusion@whitbread.co.uk