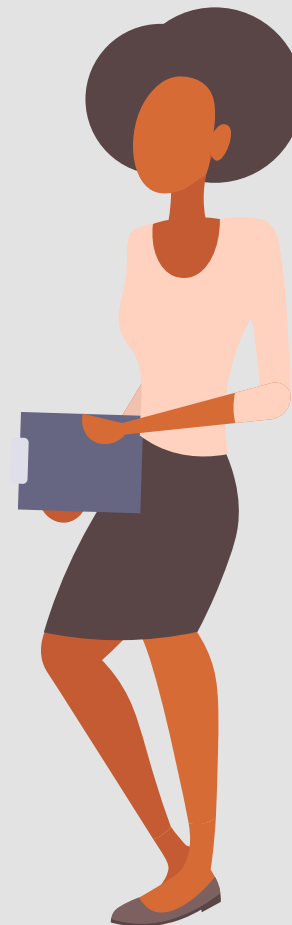


# MENOPAUSE

## Taking control

Apart from pregnancy, gender and age-related health issues are rarely discussed at work. The menopause can be tricky to talk about at home too!

In this cheat sheet we look at the benefits of chatting to others, and how we can go about this – should we choose to.



## Who can you chat to?

If you find that the menopause is affecting your happiness and ability to do your job, there are lots of people that you can chat to:

- A healthcare professional, such as your GP or a nurse.
- Supportive people in your school – particularly those who may be experiencing similar symptoms.
- Your line manager or another senior leader, if you find this more comfortable.
- Friends and family, as they may be affected by it too.

It can help just talking about how people feel, even if you don't have all the answers.

## How you might start conversations..

There are many different ways to start conversations. It's up to you whether you choose to start chatting about the menopause or not. By doing so, you may find that you can take better control of your wellbeing and working environment.

**KEEPING IT CONFIDENTIAL:** All conversations regarding your health should be confidential. You can remind your manager of this by asking, 'Is now a good time for a private chat about my health?' It might emerge that, during the conversation, you would like certain aspects shared with the team. Then you should agree who is going to do this, when and how.

**BEING SOLUTION FOCUSED:** Whilst it may be helpful for colleagues to know the difficulties that you're experiencing, change is more likely to happen if you can suggest a solution to the problem. For example, 'I've been thinking. It would be really helpful for people who are having hot flushes if we could have some cold water in the meeting, rather than just hot drinks.'

**YOU'VE GOT TO LAUGH!** Well, you don't have to, but it does help! Using humour is a great way to deflect embarrassment. If people are discussing the temperature in a room, you could explain that 'as a lady of a certain age' your thermostat is not to be relied upon!

**IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FACE-TO-FACE:** If you don't fancy having a face-to-face chat, there are lots of other options. Another colleague could speak to your manager on your behalf, you could choose to go old school and write a note, or you might prefer to send an email. Remember again to mark any correspondence as confidential and be forward thinking and solution focused in your approach.

### BEFORE MEETING YOUR GP:

- Do your research; take a look at the NICE guidelines, knowledge is power.
- Make a list of all your symptoms and anything you have used to try to alleviate them.
- Take a trusted friend or family member with you; it can be great to have support.
- Make a list of your questions; it's easy to forget once you sit down with the doctor.
- Be prepared to wait for answers; if your doctor is unsure, ask him or her to consult a colleague or read the NICE guidelines before coming back to you.

## What could you chat about?

You might want to chat about reasonable adjustments that can be made. For example, asking if there is any flexibility in your working hours so that you can attend appointments, having cover arranged if you need to take more regular toilet breaks.

Or you might want to suggest school-wide improvements. For example:

Starting up a Menopause Forum, so that women can meet up regularly to share experiences and ideas.

Having free sanitary wear in toilets or a machine that you can access at work.

Preparing for the chat can be helpful too:

- Book a time
- Prepare what you want to say and how
- Offer solutions
- Follow up: set a time to follow up on any actions that have been agreed.