



Menopause Friendly
MEMBERSHIP & ACCREDITATION
WORKPLACE TRAINING

COLLEAGUE SUPPORT PACK

MANAGING YOUR MENOPAUSE 3-STAGE PROCESS



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WORKPLACE TRAINING

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DISCLAIMER

Everyone's experience of menopause is different. We experience different symptoms, have different views or philosophies about how we'd manage them and different medical histories, too. This workbook is to help you work out what's right for you and plan your next steps.

People of diverse gender expressions and identities experience menopause, and although we may use the terms 'women' 'female' 'her' when quoting specific research, this workbook is focused on how everyone can be supported.

Disclaimer: The information, including but not limited to, text, graphics, images and other material contained in this workbook are for informational purposes only. No material is intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your GP or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions you may have regarding any medical condition or treatment and before undertaking a new healthcare regime.



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INTRODUCTION



Menopause has always been around. But we're now living and working for longer, which means more people are working through their menopause transition than ever before.

As an example, in Australia women over 50 are the fastest-growing workplace demographic. However, research tells us that the majority of people are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager or ask for the support or any adjustments they may need.

This workbook provides knowledge and understanding around menopause and signposts support and help.

The way we all think and talk about menopause, especially at work is *crucial.*

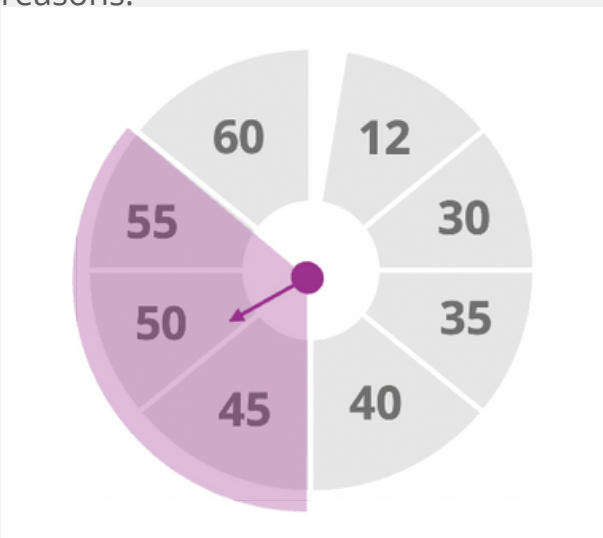
MENOPAUSE: THE FACTS

DEFINITION

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in life that occurs when hormones change and eventually menstruation stops. Someone is said to have reached menopause when they have had no period for 12 consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally).

AVERAGE AGE

The average menopause age is 51, however it can be earlier naturally or due to surgery, illness or other reasons.



STAGES OF MENOPAUSE

Perimenopause

The time leading up to menopause when they may experience changes and menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Menopause

A one-day event when menstruation stops.

Postmenopause

The time after menopause has occurred, starting when periods have ceased for 12 consecutive months and for the rest of life.

When we talk about menopause in this guidance, we are referring to any of these stages.

MENOPAUSE: THE FACTS

Everyone should have menopause awareness, so they can support colleagues, friends and family.



3 in 4 people experience menopause symptoms at some time

51

is the average age to reach menopause

8 in 10

people of menopausal age are in work

2 in 5

said symptoms were worse than expected



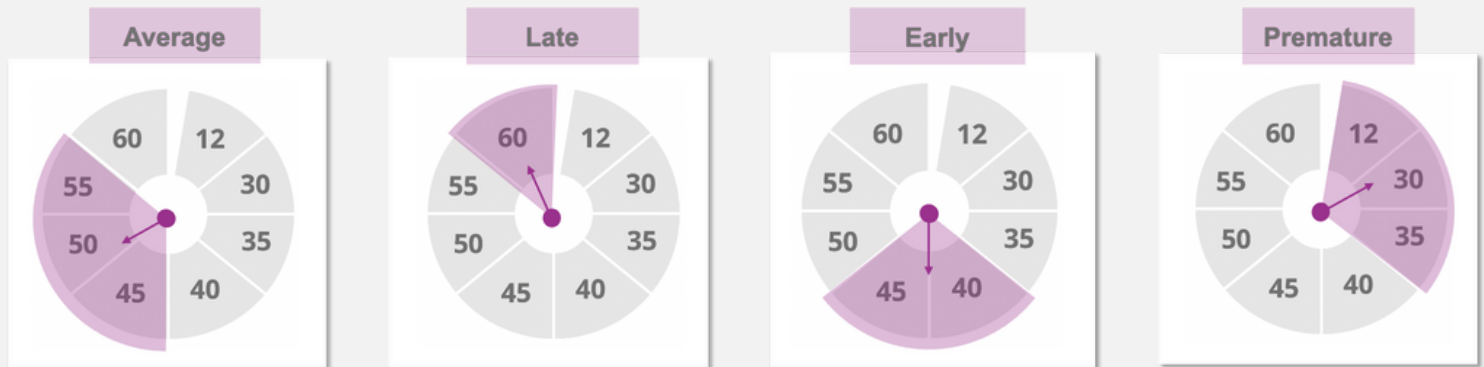
1 in 4 people experience serious symptoms

3%

of people reach menopause before they are 40

The majority of people are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to line managers

MENOPAUSE: THE FACTS



We often hear about “averages” when talking about the age menopause is experienced and this can be helpful to understand the most likely time for someone to be experiencing symptoms - normally between 45-55. However this isn't the case for everyone, some will experience it later and some earlier.

PREMATURE OVARIAN INSUFFICIENCY (POI)

Early menopause – before the age of 45 – affects 10-15% of women. But for some individuals it can come much earlier, this is called Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI).

About three in every 100 women under the age of 40, one in 1,000 women under 30 and one in 10,000 under 20 experience POI. [The Daisy Network](#) can provide much-needed support.

SURGICALLY/MEDICALLY INDUCED MENOPAUSE

Some enter menopause for reasons other than natural changes in their hormones. The two most common types are surgical and medical menopause:

- **Surgical menopause** – this occurs when ovaries are removed. Hormone levels plummet, and menopause is immediately experienced
- **Medical menopause** – this occurs when ovaries stop working due to chemotherapy, other medicines, or radiotherapy.

SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

SYMPTOMS

Hormonal changes can result in a wide range of symptoms, both physical and psychological. In research, the ones reported as having the biggest effect at work include:

Physical

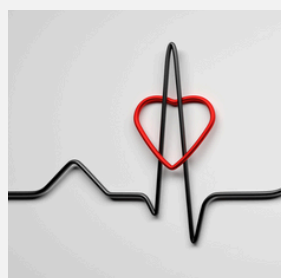
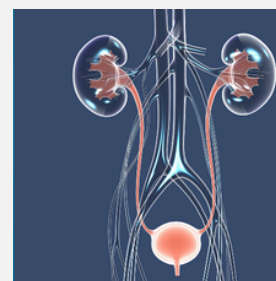
- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia or fatigue
- Hot flushes during the day or night
- Migraines or headaches
- Aches and pains
- Irregular and/or heavy periods
- Urinary issues, e.g. increased frequency

Psychological

- Low mood, depression or changes in mood
- Nervousness, worry or anxiety
- Reduced ability to concentrate or focus
- Problems with memory recall

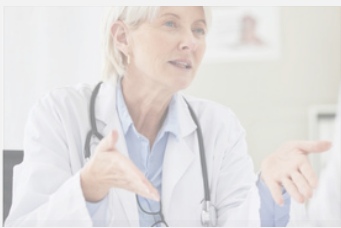
THINKING ABOUT LONG-TERM HEALTH, TOO

Understanding menopause is more than just being aware of symptoms, it's about long-term health, too. As hormone levels change, we need to take extra care about our wellbeing, in particular heart and bone health.



MANAGING MENOPAUSE

Managing menopause is a personal choice and may depend on the severity of symptoms, medical history or personal philosophy about what feels the right approach. Here we describe some of the key approaches someone may choose to consider.



Medical

First line medical treatment recommended through the AMS guidelines (Australasian Menopause Society) is menopause hormone therapy (MHT). It is essential MHT is prescribed by a qualified medical practitioner who will work with the individual to understand any risks and explore benefits. For further information visit: [Australasian Menopause Society](https://www.austmenopause.org.au/).



Complementary

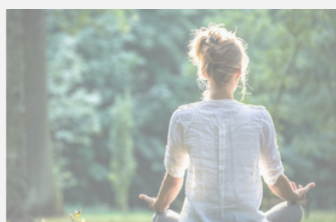
Many people turn to herbal remedies before seeing a doctor for advice. If you are investigating herbal solutions, always look for the TGA assessed (Therapeutic Goods Administration certification) mark on the box.

It is important to check anything you are taking with your healthcare practitioner.



Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle can have a positive impact on both menopausal symptoms and long-term health, so it's important to consider lifestyle changes during and after the menopause. These can include: healthy eating, regular exercise, reducing alcohol and caffeine, staying hydrated and managing stress.



Mindset

Challenging the way we think and feel about menopause can help. Focusing on self-care and kindness using tools such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness and meditation. Talking and knowing you're not on your own can often help.

MANAGING MENOPAUSE

SIGNPOSTING OUR 3-STAGE PROCESS

The Managing your menopause: 3-stage process can help those experiencing menopause understand their options and choices for managing symptoms. Everyone's experience of menopause is different. Everyone experiences different symptoms, has different views or philosophies about how they'd prefer to manage them and different medical histories, too.

The following pages help anyone experiencing menopause symptoms work out what's right for them, and plan their next steps.

SYMPTOMS				
0 = NO PROBLEM 1 = MILD SYMPTOMS 2 = SEVERE SYMPTOMS 3 = EXTREMELY SEVERE SYMPTOMS				
PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS				
Hot flushes/night sweats	0	1	2	3
Sleep problems				
Skin (dryness, itching or acne)				
Aching joints				
Weight gain or bloating				
Fatigue				
Heart palpitations				
Changes in periods				
Breast tenderness				
UTI, urinary frequency & leakage				
PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS				
Worry or anxiety				
Lower self confidence				
Mood swings				
Memory problems				
Low mood or depression				
Panic attacks				
Easily tearful				
Decreased ability to concentrate				
Brain fog				
Inability to multi task				

Stage 1:

- What are your symptoms?
- Do you experience these symptoms more at certain times?
- Prioritise the top 3 or 4
- How do they affect you at home and at work?

Stage 2:

- What is your personal philosophy to manage symptoms and long-term health?
- Do you prefer the medical, complementary or lifestyle approach, or a combination?
- Decide who you are going to talk to and when.
- Establish who can help you at home and at work.

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WHAT NEXT?

Stage 3:

- What do you plan to do to:
 - Learn more about menopause (if you need to)?
 - Manage your symptoms and long-term health?
 - Who are you going to talk to? And by when?
 - Who can help you (at work, at home)?

SYMPTOMS

0 = NO PROBLEM | 1 = MILD SYMPTOMS | 2 = SEVERE SYMPTOMS
3 = EXTREMELY SEVERE SYMPTOMS

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS	0	1	2	3
Hot flushes/Night sweats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sleep problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skin (dryness, itching or acne)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aching joints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weight gain or bloating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fatigue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Heart palpitations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changes in periods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breast tenderness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UTI, urinary frequency & leakage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS				
Worry or anxiety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lower self confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mood swings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Memory problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Low mood or depression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Panic attacks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easily tearful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decreased ability to concentrate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brain fog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inability to multi task	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Stage 1:

- What are your symptoms?
- Do you experience these symptoms more at certain times?
- Prioritise the top 3 or 4
- How do they affect you at home and at work?

Stage 2:

- What is your personal philosophy to manage symptoms and long-term health?
- Do you prefer the medical, complementary or lifestyle approach, or a combination?
- Decide who you are going to talk to and when.
- Establish who can help you at home and at work.

MANAGING MENOPAUSE

WHAT NEXT?

Stage 3:

- What do you plan to do to:
 - Learn more about menopause (if you need to)?
 - Manage your symptoms and long-term health?
 - Decide who are you going to talk to? And by when?
 - Understand who can help you (at work, at home)?

GETTING HELP AND ADVICE

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONER ABOUT MENOPAUSE

If menopausal symptoms are getting in the way of you enjoying life, it's time to talk to your healthcare practitioner. Here are some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

1 Read



AMS guidelines

Read the AMS guidelines. These are used by healthcare practitioners in Australia to determine diagnosis and treatments to offer. The AMS produce fact sheets and guidance for patients and are useful to read before you see your healthcare practitioner so you know what to expect.

2 Prepare



for your appointment

Prepare for your appointment. Keep a list of your symptoms, your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you're feeling and any changes you've noticed. Write them down and take them to your appointment. Prepare notes on any preferences you have about how you manage symptoms too e.g. if you'd like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or not. It's more likely that together you'll find the right solution faster.

3 Ask



who is best to talk about menopause

Ask who is the best person to see. Ask the receptionist who is the best to talk to about menopause. It might not be your usual doctor or it could be someone who has had special training e.g. the practice nurse.

4 Reflect



for a second opinion/
referral

Reflect if you have what you need. Talk through your preparation: your symptoms and personal preferences. Discuss your options and your healthcare practitioner's advice and recommendations. Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion if you don't feel you've received the help you need. Don't be put off, you know how you're feeling and how it's affecting you. You can read the AHPRA person centred care guidelines [here](#).

GETTING HELP AND ADVICE

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR MANAGER ABOUT MENOPAUSE

People can find it hard to talk to their manager about how menopause is affecting them. However, your manager is there to help you be at your best at work. To help you both, preparation is important. This will result in a much better conversation and outcome for both you and your employer

Above all, it's in both your best interests to find a good solution. All anyone wants is for you to be fit and well and do your job to the best of your ability.

Menopause can be isolating if you don't talk to someone but remember many are experiencing this at work, so you most certainly are not alone.

Our helpful five-step guide will support you in having successful conversations.



Keep reading to understand our tried, trusted and tested guide to having supportive conversations about menopause at work.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR MANAGER ABOUT MENOPAUSE

1

PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING

Keep a diary of your menopause symptoms and how they're affecting you. Think about what practical support might help, being flexible and ideally coming up with some different options. These may be for a short period of time while you work out how to manage your symptoms with your healthcare practitioner. Check out what support is available in your organisation.

2

BOOK A MEETING

So you'll have time and privacy to talk and you will be more likely to get your points across.

3

EXPLAIN YOUR SITUATION CLEARLY

Talk about how menopause is affecting you at work, what you're doing to manage your menopause symptoms and what your manager could do to help. Discuss what support you would like and timescales. Just knowing someone understands and is there to listen can help.

4

AGREE WITH YOUR MANAGER WHAT YOU CAN BOTH DO

They may need time to think about the best support. Remember, this may have been on your mind for a long time, but it may be the first time your manager has heard about it. Allow them time to digest the information and seek advice if necessary.

5

DO YOU WANT THE CONVERSATION TO BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Some of us are happy talking about menopause openly, others are not. Talk to your colleague about whether you want the conversation to be kept confidential or if they're happy to discuss it with colleagues. It's their choice.

6

FOLLOW UP

At the end of the meeting put a time in the diary to meet again, whether that's to agree a way forward, to monitor progress or update. Menopause symptoms can change over time, so you might need to ask for different adjustments or support.

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USEFUL RESOURCES

WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

General menopause information



[Australasian Menopause Society](#)



[Jean Hailes Foundation](#)



[International Menopause Society](#)

Guidance



[Read AMS factsheets](#)



[Talking to your GP: Factsheet from Henpicked](#)



[Dear Menopause Podcast](#)



daisy network

[Daisy Network for more information on POI and early menopause](#)

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USEFUL RESOURCES

WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Henpicked Menopause Hub: Lunch & Learns

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Menopause & HRT"

Dr Heather Currie MBE
Gynaecologist & Associate Medical Director
Founder of Menopause Matters

Menopause matters HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Hot flushes and what you can do about them"

Dr Tonye Wokoma
My Menopause Centre

my Menopause Centre HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"How to get help from your GP during menopause"

Kathy Abernethy
Peppy Health

Peppy HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Menopause, resilience and stress management"

Danny Simmonds
Resilience expert and menopause trainer

Silver Lining Training HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Cognition and mood"

Dr Clare Spencer
My Menopause Centre

my Menopause Centre HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Early menopause"

Amy Bennie
Chair, Daisy Network

daisy network HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Menopause and long-term health"

Mr Nick Panay
Consultant Gynaecologist

HORMONE HEALTH HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"HRT after cancer"

Dr Karen Morton
Dr Morton's

Dr Morton's HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Menopause and mindset"

Kate Hesk
Co-Founder of Cognomie

COGNOMIE HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Good mood food"

Jackie Lynch
Registered Nutritional Therapist

WBIWBIWBI HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Menopause and UTIs"

Dr Abbie Laing
My Menopause Centre

my Menopause Centre HENPICKED

Interview with... Lunch & learn

"Menopause and depression"

Dr Clare Spencer
My Menopause Centre

my Menopause Centre HENPICKED

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