



**South Yorkshire
FIRE & RESCUE**

Menopause Guidance

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Version 1 – March 2020

Be well
at work 

Making
**SOUTH
YORKSHIRE
SAFER &
STRONGER**

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Foreword – Alex Johnson, Chief Fire Officer

Many of you will see me simply as the Chief Fire Officer. I see myself as a senior leader in a brilliant organisation, doing a role of which I am very proud.

However, before being any of those things I am a human being first and like all of you, I cannot completely separate myself from the physiological and biological issues which affect us all.

I've been directly affected by the menopause. Simply accepted or dismissed for too long, it is now recognised as a workplace issue, with the potential to affect how we perform in our careers.

That's why I'm delighted to add my support to the Service's first ever practical guidance to menopause in the workplace - an important step, which also contributes to our aspiration to become a great place to work.

Everyone will experience the menopause differently and, of course, the majority of our workforce will experience no symptoms at all. But even male colleagues will almost certainly have family members who are affected by the menopause in some way.

That's why it's so important that we take the time and make the effort to promote understanding, so this hidden issue can be brought to light and so that we can make this service an even better workplace for all.

Introduction

The scale of the issue

Menopause has always been around but menopausal women are now the fastest growing workforce demographic.

- The average age for a woman to go through menopause is 51. It can be earlier or later than this, naturally or due to surgery, or illness. Symptoms may start years before menopause, during the perimenopause phase. Symptoms can also carry on for years after due to the post-menopause.
- According to the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM), nearly 8 out of 10 of menopausal women are in work.
- 3 out of 4 women experience symptoms, 1 in 4 could experience serious symptoms.
- 1 in 3 of the workforce will soon be over 50, and retirement ages are now 68.
- Within SYFR we have 56 females in the age group 45 – 55 – equating to almost 6% of our workforce (*March 2020*)

Research suggests that almost half of women don't seek medical advice and the majority of women don't feel comfortable talking about menopause with their line managers.

Alarmingly, in some cases menopausal symptoms can lead to women leaving their jobs. In fact one in four consider it, according to the Wellbeing of Women survey in 2016. That's not good for them and not good for their employer.

Henpicked, a leading source of information and support for women over 40 suggest that when women do understand the symptoms and ways to manage them, this can support them getting back to being themselves.

What to expect from this guide

This guide will help staff and managers to:

- Understand the ways in which employees should be supported during the menopause.
- Be confident about your role in managing and supporting colleagues with menopausal symptoms
- Understand and reduce the barriers that could potentially prevent a colleague going through the menopause transition from performing and/or developing to their full potential
- Identify appropriate workplace changes or adjustments to support team members and help them thrive at work
- Foster an inclusive working environment in which everyone is treated fairly.

While we predominantly talk about women in relation to the menopause in this guidance, we also recognise and appreciate that the menopause can impact trans and non-binary people who don't identify as women in the same manner. Although unusual, menopause can still be experienced by a few trans masculine and non-binary identified people whose female characteristics may persist at this stage of their lives. They require the same support and flexibility in the workplace as others with similar symptoms.

Although this guide is focused on the menopause, many elements of the advice and guidance could, where appropriate, be applied to other health conditions, especially those which result in fluctuating hormone levels and associated impacts e.g. the andropause (sometimes referred to as the [male menopause](#)), some thyroid conditions and diabetes.

What every manager needs to know about the menopause

Every manager should know what the menopause is, when it happens and how it can affect people.

What is it?

It's a natural stage of life when a woman's oestrogen levels decline and she stops having periods. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally)

As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, it is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

When does it happen?

The **menopause** typically happens between age 45 and 55.

The **Perimenopause** is the phase leading up to the menopause, when a woman's hormone balance starts to change. For some women this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.

The average age for a woman to undergo the menopause in the UK is 51, but around 1 in 100 experience it before the age of 40. This is known as premature ovarian insufficiency (POI), or 'premature menopause'. Often, there is no clear cause for the early onset of menopause, but it can also be as a result of surgery (for example hysterectomy, oophorectomy), illness or treatment (such as chemotherapy).

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

What are the symptoms?

The menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years. The majority of menopausal women experience symptoms, but everyone is different. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. Experiencing any of the typical symptoms can pose a challenge for women as they go about their daily lives, including at work.

Some of the most typical symptoms of the menopause include:

- psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest)
- sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable
- night sweats (hot flushes that happen during the night)
- irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) including cystitis
- headaches
- weight gain
- palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable)
- skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)
- reduced sex drive

Some have symptoms that are barely noticeable, while others experience significant changes. In some cases menopause and the reduction of oestrogen can impact on someone's mental health, potentially triggering new conditions, resulting in relapses or exacerbating a pre-existing mental health illness such as bi-polar disorder.

The period of hormonal change and associated symptoms can last for a number of years. Some women choose to take hormone replacement therapy (HRT), whereas others prefer not to 'medicalise' it and see it as a natural life stage.

To access a menopause symptom checker please see *Appendix 5*.

Typical challenges

The following workplace aspects can be particularly challenging for women who are experiencing menopause transition symptoms:

- **Inadequate ventilation, high temperatures, humidity and dryness** can have a negative impact on the experience of hot flushes
- **Stress related to workload, deadlines, responsibility, formal meetings** – especially meetings involving senior colleagues - having to learn something new and/or presentations may be linked to frequency of menopausal symptoms
- **Lack of access to appropriate toilet facilities, cold drinking water or quiet rest areas** and not being able to take regular breaks can make coping with heavy or irregular periods, hot flushes and transition-related fatigue difficult
- **Confined workspaces or crowding** can make the experience of hot flushes worse
- **Working with men, younger colleagues and service users** can cause women concern that they will not empathise or that symptoms will affect self-presentation
- **Unsuitable uniforms, ties, suit jackets or other heavy, uncomfortable or cumbersome work-wear** can exacerbate the experience of menopausal symptoms.
- **The physical demands of a job** can make heavy periods harder to manage.

Why is this important?

The symptoms outlined may pose a series of difficulties for women in the workplace. Loss of sleep, for example, can reduce ability to concentrate and stay focused. Heavy periods or hot flushes are physically distressing and can be embarrassing in front of colleagues and managers. Irritability and mood swings could mean that a woman's relationships with others at work is affected by uncharacteristic behaviour.

As well as affecting their performance at work, certain symptoms might mean women are absent from work more frequently.

Not all symptoms are directly related to the hormone changes within menopause transition, but are a consequence of their occurrence. For example, hot flushes and night sweats are sometimes said to cause insomnia - this in itself may lead to irritability, fatigue and poorer cognitive function.

The symptoms of menopause transition can have an impact on quality of working life and performance at work. These can manifest themselves in a number of different ways including:

- reduced engagement with work
- reduced job satisfaction
- higher sickness absence
- increased desire to leave work altogether.

The evidence suggests that transition symptoms might also have negative effects on:

- time management
- emotional resilience
- ability to complete tasks effectively.

Considering the above in terms of SYFR roles and potential deployment, there is a clear need to ensure that individuals going through the menopause are managed sensitively and effectively. By being aware of the impact of the menopause transition on the wellbeing of women at this stage within their working lives, line managers and women themselves can be better prepared to lessen the impact, provide supportive solutions to ensure that individuals are able to work as effectively as they are able.

What's your role as a people manager?

You have an important role to play in ensuring that anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms gets the same support and understanding as if they had any other health issue.

Line managers can make an incredible difference to wellbeing by creating a work environment which is supportive and responsive to different needs and where relevant, developing reasonable adjustments to support individuals. This is not just a moral and ethical issue - line managers, on behalf of SYFR, have a legal duty of care in relation to their staff's health, safety and wellbeing.

The role of line managers in supporting women experiencing menopause transition is crucial. Effective management of team members with menopausal symptoms that are impacting on their work will help you to improve your team's morale, retain valuable skills and talent, and reduce sickness absence.

Good people management is fundamental to supporting employee health and wellbeing, spotting early signs of ill health or distress, and initiating early intervention.

Managers need to encourage the development of a work environment where wellbeing is an open conversation and one within which menopause transition, like pregnancy, is acknowledged

as a natural process. This will enable women to feel better able to seek support, which can include asking for adjustments that may help them.

Line managers are typically:

- the first point of contact if someone needs to discuss their health concerns or needs a change or adjustment to their work or working hours, to enable them to perform to their full potential
- responsible for implementing the people management policies and practices that can help someone experiencing the menopause to feel supported, and to be effective in their role
- responsible for managing absence and keeping in touch if someone is off work ill or because of their menopausal symptoms, as well as supporting an effective return to work.

The level of trust you build with employees will determine the extent to which female colleagues are able to discuss menopausal symptoms and any support or adjustments they need at work.

If there are regular and informal one-to-ones between a manager and employee, this can provide the forum for a conversation about any changes to someone's health situation, including the menopause.

Remember - Everyone is different. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees.

TOP TIPS

Simple changes to your management style can make a world of difference

- Building relationships based on trust, empathy and respect will make it easier for an employee to feel comfortable about raising a health issue like the menopause.
- Regular and informal one-to-ones with members of your team can provide the forum for a conversation about any changes to someone's health situation, including the menopause.
- Asking people how they are on a regular basis will help to create an open and inclusive culture, and encourage someone to raise any concerns.
- Avoid making assumptions – everyone is different, so take your lead from the individual.

It's good to talk

The easier you make it for someone to open up to you, the easier it will be to identify the support they need.

Menopause can affect people's confidence and it can be very daunting talking to someone who has no knowledge/awareness of the menopause.

The more supportive and knowledgeable you are about the range of menopausal symptoms, the less likely that women will feel embarrassed to approach you and discuss how the menopause is affecting their health and their work. Awareness about the symptoms and range of support available in the organisation will also increase your own confidence in discussing the issue.

CONFIDENTIALITY - *If someone tells you about their health condition, including menopausal symptoms, this should be treated as confidential. If they want information about their condition to be shared, consent must be explicit. You should discuss with them who will be told and by whom, as well as the information they do or don't want shared with colleagues.*

While any health condition can understandably be a sensitive and personal issue for many, some of the symptoms associated with the menopause can manifest themselves in a particularly intimate, even visible, way. It's therefore understandable why many women could feel

embarrassed and reluctant to discuss the impact of their symptoms. However, most people would prefer a concerned and genuine enquiry about how they are as opposed to silence.

Avoid making assumptions about someone's health condition or ask them a direct question as to whether they have menopause symptoms. If you have concerns about someone's wellbeing or performance, ask general, open questions such as, 'How are you doing at the moment?' or 'I've noticed you've been arriving late recently, and I wondered if you're okay?' It's up to the individual to disclose any particular symptoms or health issues they may be experiencing.

Approach conversations with empathy, and try not to be embarrassed by the issue and how the individual is feeling. Regular catch-ups or one-to-ones are an opportunity to start the conversation, which should always be in a private, confidential setting where the employee feels at ease.

TOP TIP - How to approach a sensitive conversation

It's important to set the right tone when opening a conversation about any sensitive issue. But try not to worry too much – being over-sensitive will stop you from doing or saying anything.

Review this checklist before approaching a sensitive conversation, and you won't go far wrong:

- Avoid interruptions – switch off phones, ensure colleagues can't walk in and interrupt.
- Ask simple, open, non-judgemental questions.
- Avoid judgemental or patronising responses.
- Speak calmly.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Listen actively and carefully.
- Encourage the employee to talk.
- Give the employee ample opportunity to explain the situation in their own words.
- Show empathy and understanding.
- Be prepared for some silences and be patient.
- Focus on the person, not the problem.
- Avoid making assumptions or being prescriptive.

Consider discussing with the individual whether there may be benefit in making a referral to Occupational Health for medical advice.

Be aware that individuals may prefer to talk to somebody independent so ensure that they are aware of other support mechanisms e.g. SYFR Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Occupational Health, HR Advisor, Blue Light Champion, First Contact Advisor.

Carry out a risk assessment

Fulfilling your legal responsibility for health and safety will help ensure an employee's symptoms are not being exacerbated by their job.

Employers have a legal duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace risks to the health and safety of their employees. Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. Often, making simple changes to the working environment can help to alleviate the impact of some symptoms. In the case of firefighters this may include being able to cool down quickly after wearing fire kit or post-incident.

TOP TIP

A risk assessment may look at issues such as:

- temperature and ventilation
- the materials used in any uniform or corporate clothing
- access to toilet facilities and access to cold water.

Please see Appendix 3 for SYFR Menopause Risk Assessment and Appendix 4 for the SYFR Menopause Risk Assessment Flowchart

Discuss appropriate adjustments

Simple changes to someone’s role or working environment can help ensure the menopause does not become a barrier to performance.

Certain aspects of a job or the workplace can represent a barrier for someone experiencing menopausal symptoms. As a manager, you have a responsibility to consider and put in place reasonable adjustments to alleviate or remove these barriers wherever possible, so that women experiencing symptoms can carry on performing in their role.

Start by having a confidential, two-way conversation with the individual concerned, to identify the specific issues that person is experiencing. Consider involving relevant experts where appropriate, such as an occupational health practitioner, to help identify appropriate adjustments that could be put in place to help ease the impact of their symptoms on their work.

Record any specific needs (and agreed adjustments) and review these at least annually. Symptoms of the menopause can fluctuate over time, so make sure you have regular discussions with the person concerned to ensure that the support still meets their needs.

Remember - Adjustments should always be tailored to an individual’s specific needs taking into consideration the different working environments

TOP TIP - How to help someone with menopause symptoms to carry on doing their job

- Keep an open mind and avoid making assumptions about someone’s condition or how it may be affecting their ability to do their job.
- Treat every employee as an individual, because menopause symptoms can vary a lot from person to person.
- Adjustments can be physical, such as providing a fan, but they can also involve changes such as offering a more flexible working arrangement.
- Remember that menopause symptoms can fluctuate, so take a flexible approach and check in regularly with the individual.

What kind of adjustments could help?

Examples of adjustments that could be made to support women experiencing menopausal symptoms include:

- Ensuring working time arrangements, where possible, are flexible enough to meet the needs of menopausal women. For example, they may also need more breaks during the day, or may need to leave work suddenly if their symptoms become severe.
- Facilitating a comfortable working environment wherever possible – including adequate drinking water supplies, temperature-controlled areas, and access to toilets and showers or washing facilities.

- Consideration of uniform materials to allow better body temperature regulation. Looser fitting and lighter clothing could be worn in the workplace and under PPE (please discuss with your line/station manager and stores who can provide information on what can be worn and what kit is available).

See Appendix 1 for further information.

Manage performance proactively and positively

If someone's performance is suffering, it's important to help them address the root cause.

In some cases, menopausal symptoms can be so serious that they affect a person's performance at work. In this situation, it's in everyone's interest to discuss potential adjustments that could help the individual perform to their full potential.

Where there are suspected or known health issues, these should be explored, prior to any formal processes for underperformance.

Performance management should not just be a one-off annual appraisal meeting. It is most effective when it's proactive, informal and based on regular and constructive feedback and discussion. This helps to build trust-based relationships and two-way dialogue, making it easier to address any underlying health issues. If you don't address the root causes of poor performance, any solutions are unlikely to fully resolve the issue – and problems can spiral into sickness absence.

TOP TIP - How to manage health issues and performance

- Have regular, informal catch-ups with employees.
- Approach performance conversations supportively and positively.
- Take any health issues fully into account where there is underperformance on the part of an individual.
- Identify any extra support or coaching the person may benefit from.
- Set reasonable timescales for improvements.
- Be sure to manage in line with the SYFR Employee Performance Management Policy

Some tips for individuals

SYFR staff who find their menopausal symptoms are affecting their wellbeing and capacity to work should:

- Find out more about the menopause from available sources of information (*see useful resources at the end of this guidance*).
- See a GP for advice on available treatment options (see Appendix 2 for advice on discussing the menopause with your GP).
- Discuss practical needs with their line manager or another manager they feel comfortable talking to.
- Use technology where this is helpful, e.g. for reminders or note taking
- Speak with the Occupational Health team to discuss support and possible work adjustments.
- Talk about symptoms with colleagues, particularly those who are also experiencing symptoms. Work out preferred coping strategies and working patterns. If those they work with are supportive, this can make a big difference.
- Avoid hot flush triggers (such as hot food and drink) especially before presentations or meetings.
- Consider relaxation techniques such as mindfulness techniques, as these can help reduce the impact of symptoms.
- Consider lifestyle changes such as weight reduction, smoking cessation and exercise.

Further guidance for women that could help support them during their Menopause include:

- Consider asking for changes to garments worn under PPE, e.g. moisture and temperature management tee-shirts if necessary.
- Consider making requests to adjust the workplace temperature and ventilation – and explain why so colleagues understand.
- Request workplace adjustments.
- Use the SYFR Flexible Working Policy to help manage severe health conditions arising from the menopause (*note: flexible working requests are not guaranteed*).

Useful resources

- NHS guidance on menopause – www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/
- Women’s Health Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society) – www.womens-health-concern.org
- Henpicked - Menopause in the Workplace – <https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk>
- Managing Your Menopause – 3-stage process guidance (Henpicked)
- British Menopause Society – <https://thebms.org.uk>
- The Menopause doctor - <https://www.menopausedoctor.co.uk/>
- Support for premature menopause – www.daisynetwork.org.uk
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine – www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-foremployers/dealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause
- Talking Menopause – www.talkingmenopause.co.uk
- The Menopause Exchange – www.menopause-exchange.co.uk
- Menopause Matters – www.menopausematters.co.uk
- Menopause Support – <https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>
- Meg’s Menopause – <https://megsmenopause.com/menopause/>
- Menopause support (guide for men) - <https://menopausesupport.co.uk/?p=1700>
- The FBU - <https://www.fbu.org.uk/publication/fbu-good-practice-guidance-menopause>

Support

Health & Wellbeing Information	SYFR Health & Wellbeing website - https://syfrwellbeing.co.uk/ Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) support line, portal and app – FREE & CONFIDENTIAL HELPLINE on 0800 030 5182 or visit the EAP portal www.healthassuredeap.com - username: SYFR, password: EAP. App available via Apple App Store or Google Play by searching ‘My Healthy Advantage’ and use SYFR access code: MHA131327
Support & Advice	HR Advisors Occupational Health Team Health & Wellbeing Manager SYFR Fitness Advisor FBU/FOA/Unison representatives EAP First Contact Advisors Blue Light Champions
Additional Uniform	Available from SYFR Stores Email: stores2@syfire.gov.uk Tel: 0114 2532861

Appendix 1: Practical tips for supporting the menopause transition

The menopause affects people in different ways, but there are some practical steps you can take to support women experiencing the menopause at work, and help to minimise some of the most common symptoms.

Sleep disruption and/or night sweats

- Recognise someone may take more short-term absence if they've had a difficult night.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.
- Offer a flexible working arrangement, for example a later start and finish time.
- Allow someone to work from home on an ad hoc basis if they've had a rough night.

Hot flushes and/or daytime sweats

- Look at ways to cool the working environment, for example provide a fan, move a desk close to a window or adjust the air conditioning.
- Provide easy access to cold drinking water and washrooms.
- Adapt uniforms to improve comfort – e.g. if operational use of more natural/wicking fibres under uniform / PPE*.
- Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks*
- An alternative role on the fireground if possible to avoid BA - short-term basis only and if crewing allows*.
- If you have an operational member of staff who is experiencing menopausal symptoms, especially hot flushes, please give consideration when completing assessments such as heat and smoke to determine any needs*

**: Feasibility needs to be considered alongside requirements of role*

Heavy or irregular periods

- Provide easy access to washroom and toilet facilities.
- Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the toilet.
- Allow someone to temporarily work from home if they have very heavy bleeding.
- Make sanitary products available in washrooms.
- Make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed.

Headaches and fatigue

- Consider a temporary adjustment to someone's work duties.
- Provide a quiet area to work.
- Provide access to a rest room.
- Offer easy access to drinking water.
- Allow regular breaks and opportunities to take medication.

Muscular aches, and bone and joint pain

- Make any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.
- Allow someone to move around or stay mobile, if that helps.

Psychological issues (e.g. loss of confidence, poor concentration, anxiety etc)

- Encourage employees to discuss concerns at one-to-one meetings with you and/or occupational health.
- Discuss possible adjustments to tasks and duties that are proving a challenge.
- Address work-related stress by carrying out a stress risk assessment recommended by the HSE.
- Signpost to SYFR Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or counselling services (via SYFR Occupational Health team) where appropriate.
- Identify a supportive colleague to talk to away from the office or work area, such as a Blue Light / Health & Wellbeing Champion.

- Allow time out from others when needed, to have some quiet time or undertake relaxation or mindfulness activities.
- Provide access to a quiet space to work or the opportunity to work from home where feasible.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.
- Discuss whether it would be helpful for the employee to visit their GP, if they haven't already (*see Appendix 2 for information on how to talk to your GP about menopause*).

Appendix 2: How to talk to your GP about menopause

Below is some advice as provided by some thought leaders in this sector (Henpicked).

If you're suffering from menopausal symptoms to the point they're getting in the way of you enjoying life, it's time to talk to your doctor.



But sometimes that's easier said than done. It can be difficult to get an appointment, and then it can sometimes feel like a short, rushed consultation. And talking about symptoms can be hard, let alone if you feel rushed or unprepared.

So, what can you do? We've put together some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

Don't wait

It's all too common for women to feel they must simply 'put up' with [menopausal symptoms](#) as a part of life, but if they are affecting you then there are things you can do and support available. There's no need to wait until symptoms feel unbearable.

Read the NICE guidelines

This stands for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and these guidelines are what your doctor will use to determine the type of conversations to have with you and treatments to offer.

There are [guidelines for patients](#) which are really useful to read before you see your GP so you know what to expect. Print them off and take them with you if that helps.

Prepare for your appointment

It's easier for your doctor to understand what's going on if you provide them with all the information. That may sound obvious, but blood tests to say where you are on the menopause transition aren't always available or accurate – your hormones can fluctuate daily during this time. So your doctor will be thinking about what to recommend for you based on your symptoms.

Keep a [list of your symptoms](#), your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you're feeling, any changes you've noticed. It's also worth talking to friends and family, if you can – they may have noticed changes that you aren't aware of.

Write them down and take them to your appointment. Your doctor will thank you for it and it's more likely that together you'll find the right solution faster. And, if you have any preferences about how to manage your symptoms and long term health, tell them that too e.g. do you want to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT), herbal approach, changes in your lifestyle. It's your choice and you'll want to ask your GP about their opinion based on your medical history.

Ask the receptionist which doctor is best to talk to about menopause

They are often the font of all knowledge at a surgery and can help you find the best person to speak to – it might not be your usual GP, it could be someone who has had special training in the subject e.g. their practice nurse.

Ask for a longer appointment

If you don't think your standard appointment will be long enough then see if you can book a double appointment. Some surgeries do.

Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion

If you don't feel you've received the help you need, ask to speak to someone else. Don't be put off, you know how you're feeling and how it's affecting you.

Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area

Occasionally, there are regional clinics specifically devoted to menopause. If there is one in your area and you think this would be helpful, ask for a referral. Unfortunately due to funding some clinics are closing but it's still worth asking where your nearest one is.

Take your partner or a friend with you

The chances are you spend your life supporting others and during menopause, it's [your turn to ask them for support](#). Your partner or a friend will know how the symptoms are affecting you, they could support you at the appointment and also find out how they can continue supporting you.

What to expect from your doctor

There are certain things a GP should – and should not – do during your appointment.

They should:

- Talk to you about [your lifestyle](#) and how to manage both your symptoms and your longer-term health.
- Offer advice on [hormone replacement therapy](#) and other [non-medical options](#).
- Talk to you about the safety and effectiveness of any treatment.

They should not:

- Tell you that it's just that time of your life. Yes menopause is a natural stage but please don't feel that means you should have to put up with every symptom without help.
- Tell you they don't prescribe HRT. It's up to you what you want to try and for them to say whether it could be right for you, depending on your medical history.
- Impose unnecessary time restrictions e.g. they'll only prescribe this once or for a year or two. This is an ongoing conversation and if your symptoms persist, you'll still need help to manage them.

Shortage of certain HRT treatments

You may have seen in the media that there's currently a shortage of some HRT treatments. Not all treatments are affected and there are alternatives for those that are either currently unavailable or in short supply.

Here's a [document you can download](#) and take along to your GP appointment.

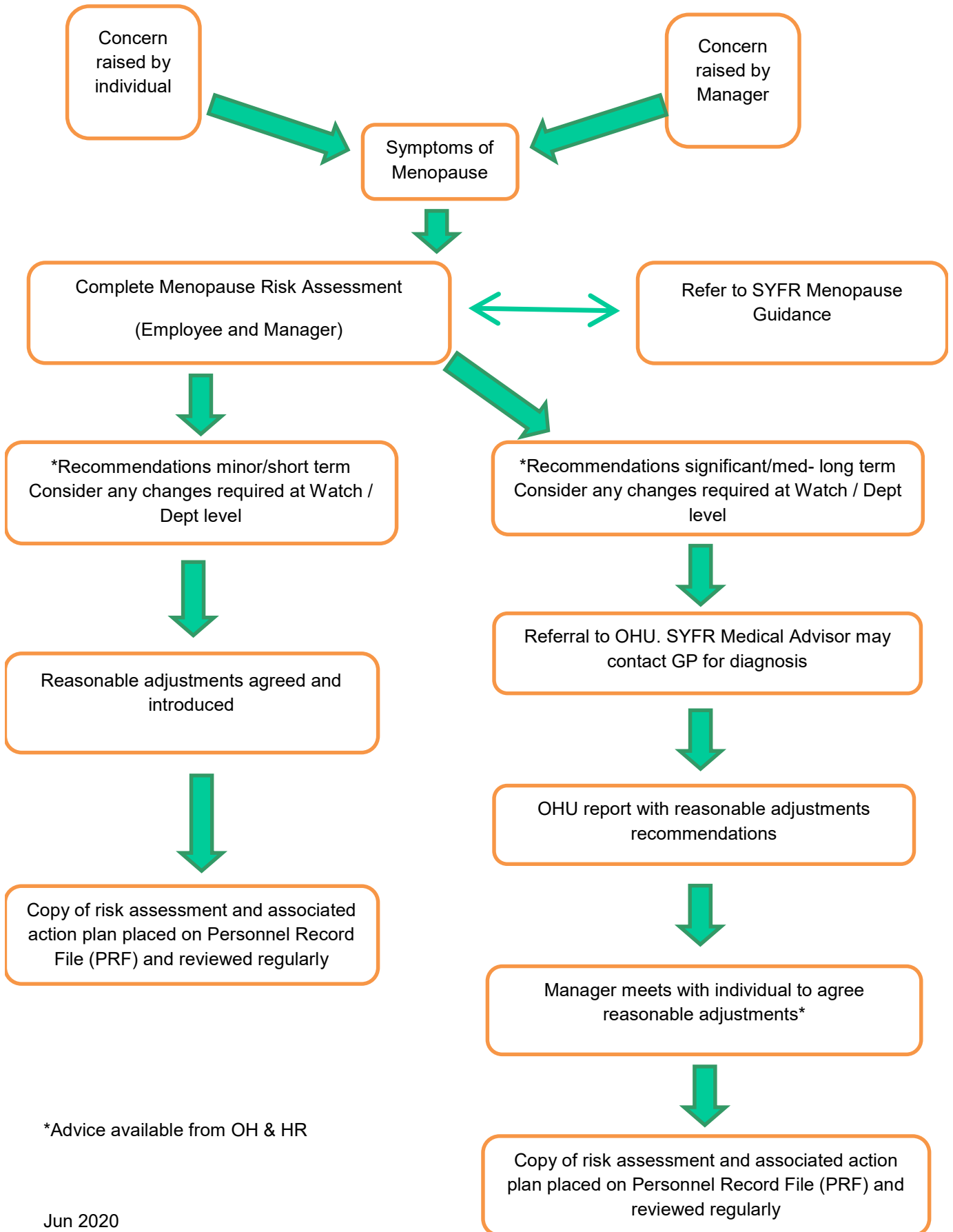
Your GP is there to help and support you, and you should feel comfortable and confident in talking to them about your symptoms and help you need. Don't think you have to struggle through menopause when there is help and support available.

Menopause is often viewed as a private matter and as a result may be rarely discussed. However, if symptoms are obvious and are a cause of anxiety or affecting your work and/or professional relationships, there are benefits in approaching your line manager, HR representative or Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This will help to ensure that appropriate support can be considered, and if you haven't already, assist you in deciding whether to raise this issue with your line manager.

Appendix 3: Menopause Risk Assessment Template

See SYFR Menopause Risk Assessment Template – available on SYFR intranet

Menopause Risk Assessment Flowchart



*Advice available from OH & HR

Jun 2020

Appendix 5: Menopause symptom checker

SYMPTOM	Yes	No	Details
DEPRESSION			
MOOD SWINGS			
CRYING SPELLS			
BRAIN FOG			
LOSS OF CONFIDENCE			
IRRITABILITY			
LOSS OF JOY			
POOR MEMORY			
POOR CONCENTRATION			
DIFFICULTY SLEEPING			
TIRED/LACKING ENERGY			
HEADACHES			
PALPITATIONS			
HOT FLUSHES			
NIGHT SWEATS			
PAINFUL/ACHING JOINTS			
CHANGES TO PERIODS			
VAGINAL SYMPTOMS			
URINARY SYMPTOMS			
LOSS OF LIBIDO			
DRY ITCHY SKIN			
DRY EYES/EARS			
ORAL HEALTH CHANGES			
THINNING HAIR			
WEIGHT GAIN			
FEELING DIZZY/FAINT			
CHANGE TO BODY ODOUR			
TINNITUS			
RESTLESS LEGS			
INCREASED ALLERGIES			
DIGESTIVE ISSUES			