

CCMS Circular 2022 / 04

21 June 2022



To: Principals of Catholic Maintained Schools

Re: MENOPAUSE POLICY

Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached the Menopause policy for principals, vice principals and teachers in CCMS schools.

Can you please ensure that this is passed to all staff within your school.

Yours sincerely

Eugene O'Neill
DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

Enc

CCMS Introduction to Menopause Workplace Policy.



CCMS is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. It is also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all our colleagues. The new workplace policy recognises that some people may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before, during and after menopause.

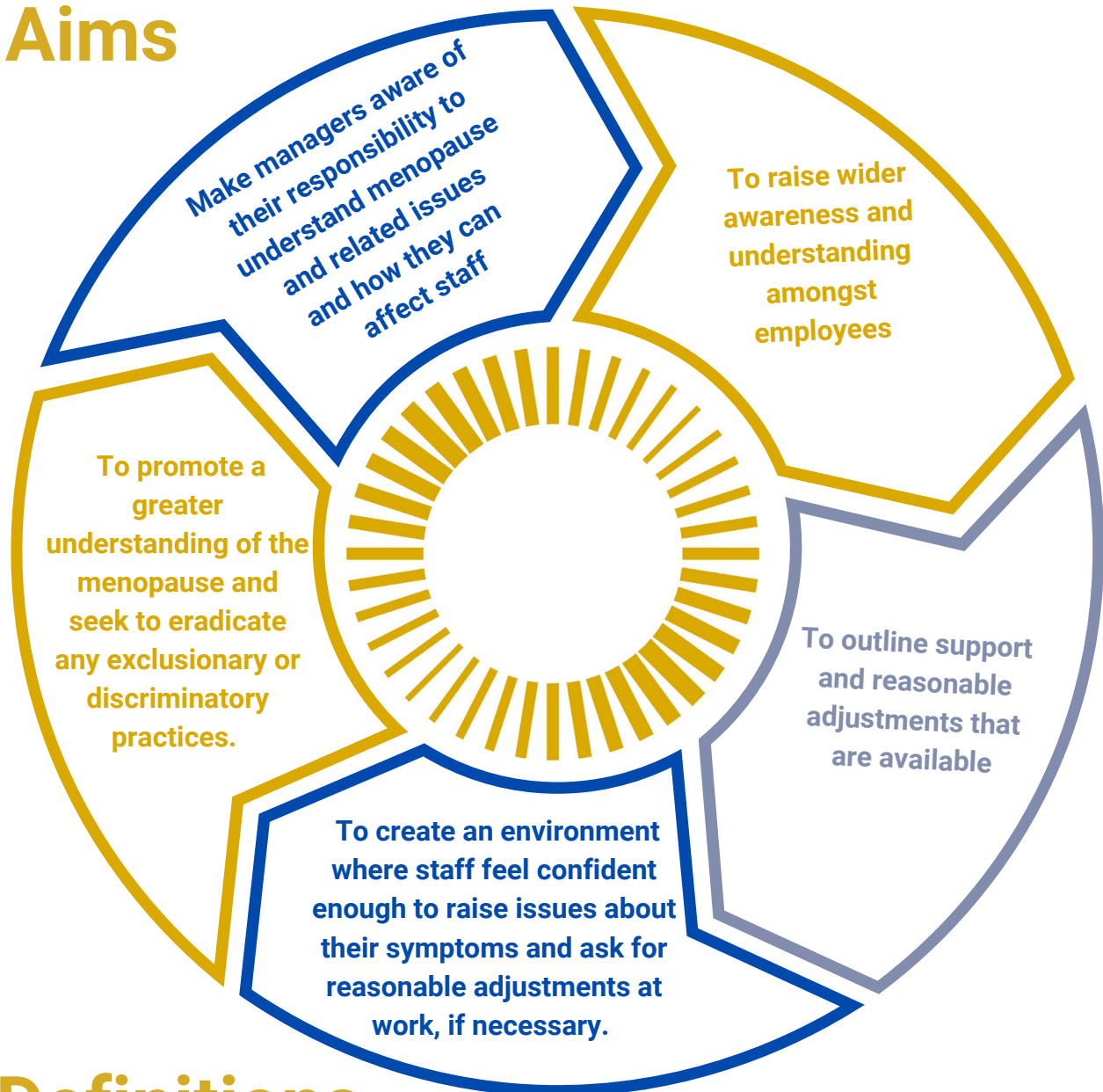
CCMS values the contributions all our employees make to delivering better outcomes for children and young people.

CCMS will support staff in work by having a positive attitude to the menopause, informing Line Managers and working proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support those who need it.



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Aims



Definitions

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process, it refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months and a person has reached the end of their reproductive life. It usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age, although it can happen any time up until mid-60s or a premature menopause can occur before the age of 45. The peri-menopause, which is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, can often last for four to five years although for some it may continue for many more years or for others last just a few months.

During the time of the peri-menopause, many may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels. These symptoms may vary in degree between different individuals from mild to very significant.



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Key principles

1



It is recognised that the menopause is a very individual experience and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

2



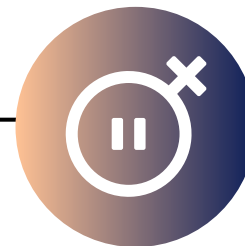
As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, it will be treated as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event. Appropriate information/support will be provided to all staff with regards to the menopause. Any adjustments will be considered and acted on appropriately within an appropriate timescale.

3



CCMS supported by Trade Unions and those affected, welcome the workplace policy and hope that it goes a way to addressing and alleviating staff experiences during the menopause.

4



Awareness raising sessions will be provided over the lifetime of the policy for line managers and staff by EA. Support can be given by the HR Department or the respective HR Adviser, Occupational Health and Inspire Workplace Services.





**MENOPAUSE POLICY AND
GUIDANCE FOR
PRINCIPALS, VICE
PRINCIPALS & TEACHERS
IN CATHOLIC MAINTAINED
SCHOOLS.**



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- Appendix 2 - Menopause Advice Sheet
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works in the Maintained sector.

1.2. CCMS is the employing authority of teachers of which a high percentage are female.

1.3 This policy has been developed in consultation with the Education Authority and teaching trade unions.

1.4 Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and it isn't always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better. Every woman's experience will be different and so there can be no 'one size fits all' approach. Some women will experience few or no symptoms at all, while for some women it will have a devastating effect on their professional and personal lives. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

1.5. Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden'. We want everyone to understand what menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women, men should be aware too.

1.6. The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work. Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their Line Manager, nor ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.

1.7. This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and Line Managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. This is good practice. Staff will be consulted on any proposed changes at school level.

2. AIMS

2.1. The aims of this policy are to:

2.1.1. Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about menopause.

2. AIMS

2.1.2. Ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently have good conversations, and are clear on company policy and practices, supported by Inspire Workplace Services and Occupational Health.

2.1.3. Educate and inform Principals, School Leaders, and Line Managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can best support women at work. Training is provided by the Education Authority by means of sessions and workshops.

2.1.4. Ensure that women suffering with menopausal symptoms feel confident to discuss it, and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles or studies.

2.1.5. Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

2.1.6. This policy is fully compliant with the following legislation:

- The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 (Amended 1998) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Order, employers are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risks to menopausal women if they are employed.
- The Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 as amended prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of sex.
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 as amended prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of disability. It is also important to note that conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the DDA and require reasonable adjustments.
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of age.
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a duty on CCMS to consider positive action through paying due regard, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. CCMS also have a duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

2.1.7. Assure women that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.



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3. SCOPE

3.1. This policy applies to all Teaching staff in CCMS schools, including Principals and Vice Principals. Boards of Governors should also be aware of this policy.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1. Menopause

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

4.2. Perimenopause

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular, heavy periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

4.3. Postmenopause

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred. The average time for women experiencing symptoms of menopause is five years, but many women experience symptoms for up to ten years and 3% of women will experience symptoms for the rest of their lives.

Post-menopausal women have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis and managers should be aware of this.

4.4 Premature Menopause

Premature menopause refers to menopause that occurs before age 40 years, and early menopause refers to menopause that occurs at or before age 45 years, both ranges being well below the median age of natural menopause (age 51 years).



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5. SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

5.1. While every woman will experience the menopause, no two women may present with the same symptoms. Some women will experience few or no symptoms whilst some women will experience such severe symptoms, it severely affects their professional and personal lives.

5.2. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not exclusively, hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some women also experience difficulty sleeping.

The menopause itself is not classed as a disability but women with pre-existing conditions may experience a worsening of their symptoms due to the menopause which could mean they are classified as disabled as defined under the DDA 95.

Symptoms of the menopause may include:

Vasomotor Symptoms

- Hot flushes and Night Sweats

Psychological effects of hormone changes

- Low mood/mood swings
- Poor memory and concentration
- Insomnia
- Loss of libido
- Anxiety/panic attack

Physical Symptoms

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Joint aches and pains
- Palpitations
- Formication (creeping skin)
- Insomnia

Consequences of oestrogen deficiency

- Obesity, diabetes
- Heart disease
- Osteoporosis/chronic arthritis
- Dementia and cognitive decline
- Cancer

Sexual Symptoms

- Reduced sex drive
- Painful sex/*vaginal dryness
- Urinary tract infections
- Vaginal irritation

N.B. This is not an exhaustive list. The medication that a person may be on may impact other health conditions eg. HRT and other treatments.



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6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. Members of staff:

6.1.1. All staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health;
- Being open and honest in conversations with Principals, HR and Occupational Health;
- If a member of staff is unable to speak to their Principal or Line Manager, or if their Line Manager or Principal is not supporting them, they can speak to the CCMS HR Adviser responsible for their school, or their Union, or Inspire Workplace Services on 0808 800 0002.
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment;
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues;
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

6.2. Principals / School Leaders / Line Managers (see Appendix 1 for Managers' Guidance)

6.2.1. All Principals / School Leaders / Line Managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Use the guidance in Appendices 1 and 2, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required;
- Record any adjustments agreed with staff members (if applicable);
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to;
- Monitor the ongoing situation

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Principal, School Leader, Line Manager may:

- Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice;
- Refer the employee to Occupational Health;
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Continue to review the adjustments agreed with the staff member.



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6.3. Occupational Health

6.3.1. The role of Occupational Health Professional is to:

- Carry out an holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing, providing advice and guidance in line with up-to-date research;
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice (refer to Appendix 2 for more information);
- Provide support and advice to CCMS HR and Principals / School Leaders / Line Managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments, if required;
- Monitor referrals due to menopausal symptoms, and provide additional signposting, where required;
- Review the Menopause Advice Sheet (see Appendix 2).

6.4. Individual School's CCMS HR Adviser.

6.4.1. CCMS HR Advisers will:

- Offer guidance to Principals / School Leaders / Line Managers on the interpretation of this Policy and Guidance;
- Attend training sessions organised by EA in relation to Menopause awareness;
- There will be awareness-raising sessions for staff and Line Managers. Best practise or short sessions will be available throughout the calendar year provided by EA.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance.

6.5. Inspire Workplace Services will:

- Provide access to 24/7 confidential helpline, telephone counselling and face-to-face counselling for all members of staff on 0808 800 0002.
- Provide a video link (See Appendix 4).

7. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy is linked to other policies and procedures within CCMS such as; Attendance, Flexible Working etc.

8. CONSULTATION PROCESS

This policy has been developed from engaging with Trade Unions as best practice examples of workplace policies on Menopause.

Particular thanks goes to INTO, and NASUWT for their contribution.



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9. THIS POLICY HAS BEEN EQUALITY IMPACT APPROVED AND IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GDPR

10. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Managers' Guidance For Colleague Discussions;
- Appendix 1a – Confidential Colleague Discussion Template;
- Appendix 2 – Menopause Advice Sheet;
- Appendix 3 – Useful links suggested by our Occupational Health provider;
- Appendix 4 - Menopause Video Link details from Inspire Workplace Services

11. LINKS TO EXTERNAL SERVICES

- All colleagues can access counselling by contacting Inspire Workplace Services (0808 800 0002)
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. These explain how your GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer you. You can find out more information by using the following link
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information>.
- The National Health Service provides an overview of menopause. You can find more at
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>.
- Menopause information. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information in a dedicated area of their website at: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>.
- Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) information and support on very early menopause. You can find out more at
<https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>.



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- Information on Hysterectomy. This provides an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy. Further details can be found at <https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk>.
- Northern Ireland Safety Group – Promoting Occupational Safety and Health at <https://www.nisg.org.uk>
- <https://nipsa.org.uk/nipsa-in-action/equality/697-guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace>
- Awareness raising Webinar 1st April, 2020
<https://www.into.ie/ni/2021/04/01/menopause-in-the-workplace-raising-awareness>
- EA Policy: <https://www.eani.org.uk/about-us/equality/gender-action-plan/menopause-workplace-policy>
- Promoting equality in employment for women affected by Menopause:
<https://www.lra.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-05/MenopauseInWorkplace.pdf>
- Menopause, HRT & Women's Future Health webinar can now be viewed online: <https://www.into.ie/ni/2021/09/28/into-learning-webinar-menopause-hrt-and-womens-future-health/>



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APPENDIX 1

Principals / School Leaders / Line Managers' Guidance for colleague discussions

CCMS recognises that every woman is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

All advice is given and written, in accordance with the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) recommendations and best practice.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) – hand out the Menopause Advice Sheet (Appendix 2);
- Agree on actions/ adjustments (if applicable), and how to implement them; (you should use the template at Appendix 1a to record the meeting, so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends). Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is stored securely;
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room.



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APPENDIX 1

Symptoms Support:

Below are examples of what may be achievable for various situations in the Workplace however Principals will have to consider any reasonable adjustment in line with the needs of the School. – School leaders can seek advice from CCMS HR, Inspire, Trade Union Colleagues etc

Hot Flush

- Consider a request for temperature control for the teacher's work area, such as a fan on their desk or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Consider easy access to drinking water;

Heavy/light Periods

- As is normal, have access to washroom facilities;
- Sanitary products may be available in washrooms in order to obtain personal protection;
- Consideration can be given to the best option for teachers to change clothing. (if needed)

Headaches

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water; All staff would be encouraged to use their own water bottles on a continual basis;
- Consideration given to time to take medication, if needed.



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APPENDIX 1

Symptoms Support:

Difficulty Sleeping

- Discussion regarding flexible working available which may involve a temporary/permanent change of working pattern and contract

Low Mood

- Discussion of how this affects the teacher in the classroom and their interaction with colleagues/staff and parents. Discuss and agree need for adjustments (if applicable).
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of their work area;
- Contact Inspire Workplace Services on 0808 800 0002.

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions;
- Have regular dedicated time with their Manager to discuss any issues;

Poor Concentration

- Review task allocation and workload;
- Discuss the provision of books to record reminder lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment, effective use of IT i.e diary reminders;
- Discuss what other strategies the teacher may find acceptable, bearing in mind the needs of the school.

Anxiety and Panic Attacks

- Promote counselling services provided by Inspire Workplace services, 0808 800 0002.
- Discuss individual experiences and plan the best way forward with the teacher, bearing in mind safety for all.

***This list is not exhaustive.**



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APPENDIX 1

Symptom Support

Consistency in approach in adopting this policy is paramount particularly in split-site working arrangements, etc.



Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety. If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.



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APPENDIX 1A

Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template

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Present at meeting (Principal / School Leader name and position)

Date of discussion

Summary of Discussion:

Agreed Actions/Adjustments:

Date of next review meeting

.....

Signed (Member of staff)

Signed (Manager)



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APPENDIX 2

Menopause Advice Sheet – How to talk to your GP about menopause.

If you are 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.

We all know how difficult it can be just to get an appointment, and then it's often only ten minutes. 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 is 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, there are things you can do, and support available. There is 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.

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, and any changes you've noticed. 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 you manage your symptoms, tell them that too – for example, if you'd like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT), or not.

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.

Ask for a longer appointment. If you don't think your standard appointment will be long enough, try to book a double appointment, as some surgeries do offer this.



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APPENDIX 2

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.

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:

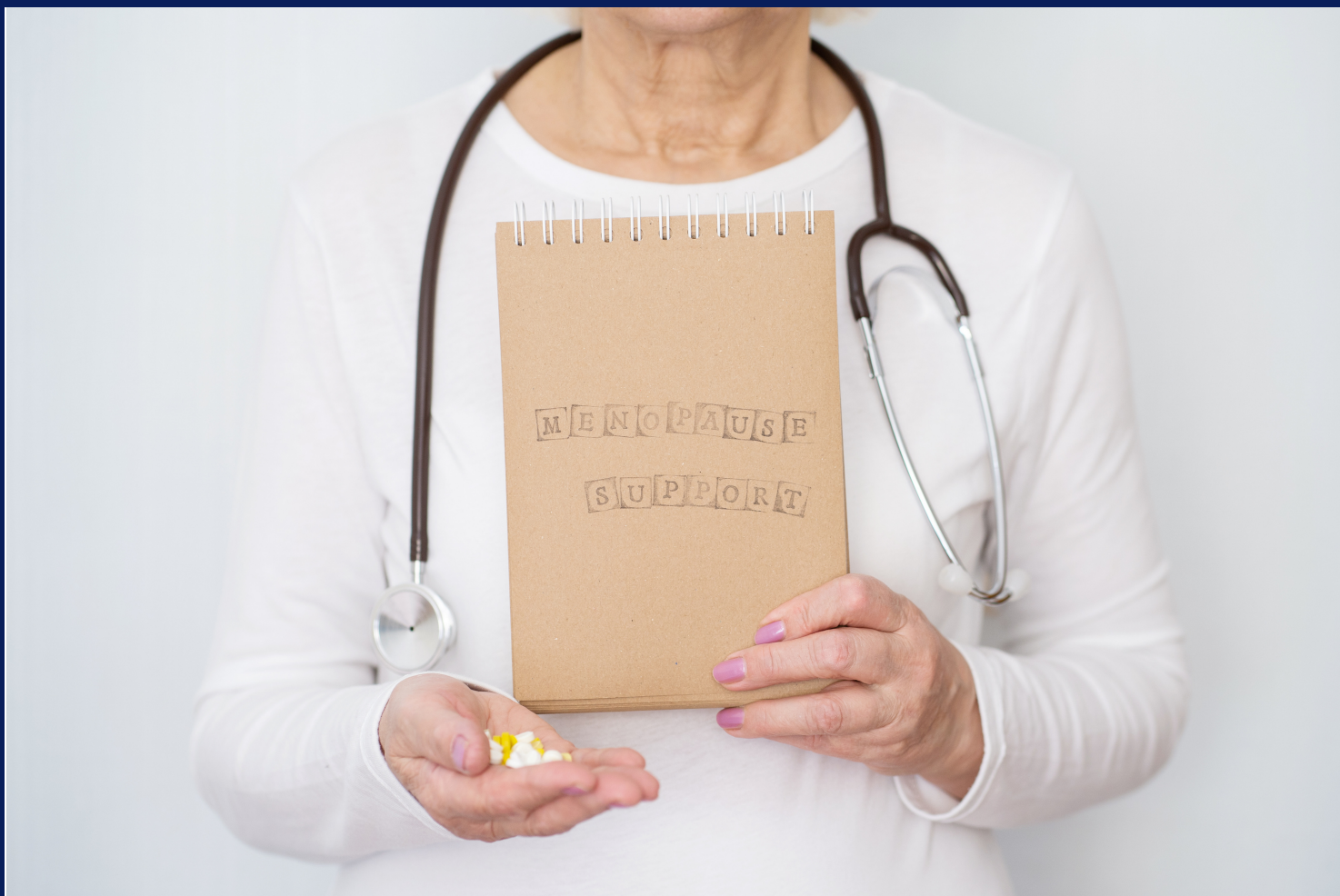
- Tell you that it's just that time of your life. Yes, menopause is a natural stage, but please don't feel that means you should have to put up with every symptom without help;
- Tell you they don't prescribe HRT. It's up to you what you want to try, and for them to say whether it could be right for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

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

All staff can access counselling by contacting the Inspire Workplace Services 0808 800 002.



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APPENDIX 3

Useful links suggested by our Occupational Health Provider

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/menopause>

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

<https://thebms.org.uk/clinic/belfast-trust-hrt-clinic/>

APPENDIX 4

Menopause information from Inspire Workplace Services

Inspire has a video on the topic of menopause which you can view here:

https://youtu.be/M6zzZ1yk7_w



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