

Our Group Inclusion Commitments

Menopause-friendly workplace principles

and positive menstrual health at work

February 2022





Menopause and menstrual health

Summary

Menstruation and menopause are a normal and healthy part of life for most women and for some other people. Despite this, menstruation and menopause are often stigmatised around the world. There can be a lack of information about them, myths and misinformation, or even cultural taboos that stop people talking about them. This can make it difficult to promote and maintain positive menstrual health and to feel supported before, during and after menopause.

Better understanding of these topics, honest conversations, supportive teams and simple changes at work can mean happier and healthier lives for colleagues who menstruate or experience menopause.

Learning more about menstruation and menopause can also help us all to better support family and friends – which is great for everyone’s wellbeing outside of work too.

To help, we have worked with colleagues across our businesses and with an external expert to create guidance on positive menstrual health at work and a set of menopause-friendly workplace principles. These set out how managers, HR, facilities teams and all colleagues can collaborate to create workplaces and working culture where anyone experiencing menstruation or menopause is supported in the best way. This toolkit explains the principles in detail and where to learn more.

As one of our Group Inclusion Commitments, this is a minimum standard for Spirax-Sarco Engineering Group. Where current practice or local law go further than this commitment, the greater benefit should always continue to apply.

We’ve created menopause-friendly workplace principles for our Group.



Menopause and menstrual health

Menstruation and positive menstrual health

What is menstruation?

Menstruation and the menstrual cycle aren't usually talked about much at work. However, knowing more about them means that we can all support the positive wellbeing of ourselves or of colleagues, family and friends.

The menstrual cycle is the series of natural changes in hormone production and the structure of the reproductive system that make pregnancy possible. This can cause some women and other people who menstruate (such as trans men, non-binary or gender-fluid people) to experience problems that disrupt their daily lives. This might include cramps, joint pain, tiredness, mood changes or pain from menstrual bleeding (called periods or menses), for example.



Why does this matter at work?

A 2021 survey (**Bloody Good Employers**) found that 87% of people who menstruate experience anxiety or stress at work because of their period. More than a quarter of these workers never felt supported by their employer when it came to

menstrual health, and 25% believed that taking time off for menstrual health issues had negatively affected their career.

When asked what their employers could do to help, 63% said they should normalise the conversation around periods in the workplace, while 59% said employers should provide more information to all employees.

Across our Group, we want to ensure that none of our colleagues who menstruate are disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their symptoms. This needs open and honest conversations between colleagues and managers within supportive workplaces and teams.



Menopause and menstrual health

Menstruation and positive menstrual health continued

Guidance for supporting positive menstrual health at work

Colleagues experiencing menstrual symptoms that affect the quality of their working life are encouraged to talk to their manager or HR about their situation so that the best support can be provided.

Managers should be ready to have open discussions about menstrual health and treat these confidentially, professionally and sympathetically. This may involve identifying adjustments to the working environment or working patterns to help any colleague experiencing difficulties (and regularly checking if any changes are needed to these). Everyone's situation will be unique and may vary over time.

Examples of adjustments that might help include changes to working hours or location (e.g. ability to work from home); reducing travel; increasing rest breaks; ensuring paid time off for medical appointments; making spare uniforms available, or allowing time off work.

We can all help by challenging inappropriate behaviour - such as jokes, teasing or 'period shaming' (which can have a negative impact on mental health), and by reporting any related discrimination, harassment or bullying.

Facilities and Health and Safety teams can also help by making period products (such as tampons, sanitary pads and panty liners) available in toilet or cloakroom facilities. These should be accessible in a broad range of locations (e.g. women's, accessible and gender-neutral facilities). Products should ideally be available free of charge and

procured locally from sustainable sources. This helps to support positive menstrual hygiene and health. It also protects the dignity of those who are unable to afford sanitary products (combating 'period poverty') or who are 'caught out' by unexpectedly early or heavy periods.

Where colleagues find that their menstrual symptoms impact their mental health, our global Employee Assistance Programme may also be able to help. It's free of charge, confidential and available 24/7 in your local language.



Menopause and menstrual health

Menopause and perimenopause – the basics

What is menopause/perimenopause?

Menopause is a natural life stage that all women will experience, typically when aged 45-55 (but sometimes much earlier). Women may also become menopausal due to certain surgical and medical interventions.

Menopause is the 12-month anniversary of a woman's last menstrual cycle. It is preceded by perimenopause – a stage where oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone levels decline. In around 80% of women, this will be accompanied with a variety of emotional, physical and psychological symptoms if the right support is not available or accessible. Perimenopause may last for 3-7 years.

Symptoms can last for 3-7 years post-menopause (sometimes longer) without the right support. These vary between people (and some people who menstruate won't experience any symptoms at all). It's a unique experience, but common symptoms include hot 'flushes' or 'flashes', difficulty sleeping, night sweats, mood changes, anxiety, feeling alone, and 'brain fog' (which might affect decision-making, concentration, memory loss or recall).

Menopause and perimenopause also affect trans people (including trans men) and non-binary people, gender-fluid people and other genders. It can be very challenging for women in same-sex relationships where both partners experience symptoms at the same time, and for people with an unsupportive partner or family.

Menopause and perimenopause can also initiate or worsen existing medical conditions, may be triggered early by certain cancer treatments (this can also happen to men), and some studies suggest that symptoms may be more severe for Black women. Often, partners of people experiencing symptoms may also be affected – feeling unsure about what's happening or how to help and anxious about their relationship.

Like menstruation and menstrual health, menopause is rarely discussed at work, but it's important that we all understand more so that we can get the right support ourselves or help others who are experiencing it – at work or at home.

No one should ever feel embarrassed or unable to talk about the subject, about how it's affecting them or about getting support.



Menopause and menstrual health

Menopause and perimenopause – why this matters at work

The impacts of symptoms at work

There are over 34 symptoms of menopause and everyone's experience is unique, but a range of surveys show some common trends.

For example, 65% of women say they experienced concentration loss, 58% have greater stress, and 52% feel they had less patience with colleagues or customers as a result of their symptoms.

These symptoms can affect how our colleagues, family or friends feel about work and life at home. For example:

- 90% say their symptoms have a negative impact on their work; more than 50% say their colleagues notice this.

- 31% think about reducing their working hours and 32% consider leaving their job as a result.
- 30% of those experiencing this take sick leave, but only a quarter feel able to tell their manager the real reason for their absence.
- Over 75% of women say their workplace offers no support on menopause.
- 100% of people will be affected by this – directly themselves, or through colleagues, family or friends... So, we can all help make a positive difference.



Sources: [CIPD](#) (2019); [Newson Health](#) (2019); [Police Federation Menopause Survey](#) (2019)



Menopause and menstrual health

Menopause and perimenopause – why this matters at work continued

Global perspectives

In a global survey of over 700 women (aged 45-65) experiencing perimenopause or menopause across Brazil, India, Mexico, Poland, Russia, South Africa and the UK:

- 44% of women were unaware of perimenopause and 46% did not expect perimenopause to start when it did (it was 60% in the UK and 50% in South Africa).
- 27% of women agreed that their families find their symptoms overwhelming.
- Fear of ageism was a common reason for women not wanting to talk about perimenopause or menopause at work.
- The most common advice from women who have experienced menopause was to **learn about it, talk about it and seek support.**
- Very small, practical changes can make a massive difference to the quality of working life for anyone affected by menopause. These can result in happier, healthier and more satisfying lives at work and at home for everyone.



Source: Avon (2020), [Menopause TLI: Too Little Information report](#)



Menopause and menstrual health

Our Group Inclusion Commitment

We will create menopause-friendly workplaces to ensure anyone experiencing menopause feels safe and is treated fairly, respected and appropriately supported.

Context

Wherever we work, we will support all colleagues experiencing menopause in a way that recognises and respects the uniqueness of their personal situation.

These Menopause-Friendly Workplace Principles are our minimum standard of support. Some parts of the world have employment legislation that offers specific support or rights on menopause. Where current practice or local law go further than our workplace principles, any greater benefits should continue to apply.

Fair treatment for all

Our policies and procedures must ensure that colleagues experiencing perimenopause or menopause are not disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their symptoms. This will rely on open and honest conversations between colleagues and line managers within a supportive environment.

We will also ensure that we do not discriminate against anyone on the basis that they might experience menopause in the future.

The importance of open conversations

Colleagues experiencing symptoms are encouraged to let their manager know if this may impact their work. If they are uncomfortable discussing this with their manager, they can also talk to local HR teams.

Colleagues are also encouraged to seek professional medical support and use our global Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for free, confidential advice whenever they need it.

Where symptoms result in colleagues feeling unwell, local sickness absence policy should be followed.

Managers and HR teams should be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause and treat these sensitively, confidentially, professionally and sympathetically at all times.

Everyone's situation will be unique and may vary over time – and no one should ever feel embarrassed about talking about menopause or their menstrual health.



Menopause and menstrual health

Our Group Inclusion Commitment continued

Practical workplace support

Appropriate support can also include identifying adjustments to the working environment or working patterns (and regularly checking if any changes are needed to these). Helpful adjustments might include (but are not limited to):

- Controlling environmental factors (e.g. providing desk fans; seating colleagues nearer windows/ open doors or away from direct heat; using window blinds; providing access to chilled drinking water).
- Being flexible on uniform and dress codes (where these make symptoms worse), providing additional spare uniforms or layers of clothing, and using breathable fabrics when procuring new uniforms.
- Reducing travel or increasing rest breaks.
- Flexible working (e.g. working around symptoms, adjusting start/finish times, home-working, flexible breaks, temporary changes to duties, turning the camera off when on video calls) and giving time for colleagues to attend related medical appointments.
- Providing cool and/or private spaces for those experiencing menopause to rest, to talk with HR or other trusted colleagues (such as peers in our Women's Network), or to phone for professional support (e.g. the Employee Assistance Programme).
- Ensuring supply of sanitary products in washrooms (accessible to all colleagues).

We can all help through our behaviour too – for example, by allowing preparation time for meetings; by challenging inappropriate language, jokes or teasing, and by reporting any discrimination, harassment or bullying.



Menopause and menstrual health

Where to learn more – menstrual health

The Menstrual Health Hub: A global hub of networks and resources on positive menstrual health, listing over 900 support organisations around the world.

Advice and inspiration from UNICEF, the United Nations Children’s organisation:

- **How girls and boys are busting period myths in five countries**
- **Menstruation guide for teachers** (useful for parents too)
- **Guidance on menstruation for women and girls with disabilities**

Research and action on menstrual equity at work and in society from ‘Bloody Good Period’:

- **Main website**
- **Period poverty report**
- **Bloody good employers report** (UK focus with global relevance)

Frequently asked questions about menstruation and human rights from the United Nations Population Fund.

Planet-friendly period care from **TOTM** – including sustainable period products for workplaces.

Advice and guidance on period health from **Tampax**

Alliance for Period Supplies – US campaign to end period poverty.

Health.com menstruation information hub:

Includes articles on eco-friendly menstruation products, menstruation as a non-binary or trans person, helpful period tracking apps and more.

Menstrual Hygiene Day campaign

Advice for Dads on talking to their daughter about menstruation, including advice for single fathers:

- **The Good Men Project**
- **Bloom & Nora**
- **Single Parents Wellbeing**



Menopause and menstrual health

Where to learn more – menopause

General resources, blogs and websites

Mental Health UK: Links between menopause and mental health.

Menopause and Me: How to discuss your symptoms.

Menopause Matters: General information website (UK).

Women of a Certain Stage: Coaching and mentoring support.

My Queer Menopause: LGBTQ+ perspectives on menopause.

Let's talk menopause: A guide to help men understand and talk about menopause.

Menopause Support: Understanding menopause for men.

Henpicked and **Menopause Cafe**: More blogs, stories and resources.

Global perspectives and resources

IMS: Menopause organisations in different countries (via the International Menopause Society website – largely focused on medical interventions).

Bella Online: Menopause in different cultures – information hub.

Avon: Global perspectives and experiences of menopause in the Avon 'Too Little Information' report.

Red: Menopause stories from Black and Asian British women.

Women's Health Network: Menopause in different cultures.

North American Menopause Society: Staying healthy during menopause.

United Nations: Menstruation resources



Menopause and menstrual health

Where to learn more – menopause continued

Tools and information for Human Resources teams and line managers

Henpicked: Checklist for menopause-friendly workplaces.

CIPD: Guide to Managing Menopause at Work.

CIPD: Let's Talk Menopause portal.

People Management: The importance of manager training/awareness on menopause.

Women of a Certain Stage: Global menopause at work consultancy, training, coaching and mentoring.

Henpicked: Menopause in the Workplace programmes, resources and support.

Community Business: Community Business in Asia article and podcast on women's health and wellbeing in the workplace and how this affects their careers.

Our global Employee Assistance Programme

Getting support

It's OK not to be OK, and it's a strength to seek support. That's why we have a global Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). It's free, completely confidential, available 24/7 and in your local language – for everyday life and for more challenging times. See how to access the service below. You can find more information on SharePoint locally as well.

What does EAP help with?

- Stress and anxiety
- Work advice
- Relationship advice
- Gambling issues
- Counselling
- Bereavement and loss
- Financial wellbeing
- Legal advice
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Family issues
- Childcare matters
- Medical information
- Consumer issues
- ...and more.

Get support in the UK

www.healthassuredeap.co.uk

Username: *****

Password: *****

Call: *****

Download the **My Healthy Advantage app** on your personal device for advice on the go.

Access code: *****



Get support around the world

www.guidanceresources.com

Register using ***** as the ID, then select a username and password to use every time. Click the flag icon (top right of the page) to select your country and language for local resources and contact details. Download the app on your personal device by searching for **GuidanceResources** (one word) in your App Store.



Knowing more about menopause and menstrual health is good for the wellbeing of our colleagues and can help us all to better support family and friends outside of work.