

Debate Pack

Number 2021/0078
By Aaron Kulakiewicz,
Tom Powell,
Rachael Harker
7 June 2021

Support for people experiencing menopausal symptoms

1	Background	2
2	Statistics	4
3	Parliamentary Material	5
3.1	Debates	5
3.2	Parliamentary Questions	5
4	Press Material	10
4.1	News Articles	10

Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on the 'Support for people experiencing menopausal symptoms' has been scheduled for Wednesday 9 June 2021 from 4:50-5:50pm. The debate has been initiated by Carolyn Harris MP.

1

Background

The menopause is a natural stage in life when a woman's periods stop, and she is no longer able to get pregnant naturally.

It happens when there is a change in the sex hormones as a woman gets older. The ovaries stop producing the hormone oestrogen and no longer produce an egg each month.

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45-55; the average age for women in the UK to reach menopause is 51. The process is usually gradual and occurs over several years. Menopause can also be triggered by some treatments for cancer, and in some exceptional cases, younger women may become menopausal (known as premature menopause).

Most women will experience menopausal symptoms that are caused by the change in the balance of hormones. These symptoms can have a significant impact on daily life and well-being and experiences vary widely between women. Common menopausal symptoms include:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- vaginal dryness and discomfort during sex
- difficulty sleeping
- low mood or anxiety
- reduced sex drive (libido)
- problems with memory and concentration.

The fall in hormone levels that accompanies the menopause can increase the risk of heart disease and osteoporosis.

In November 2015 the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published its first national guideline on menopause ([NG23, Menopause: diagnosis and management](#)), and this was last updated in December 2019. NICE recommends that help and information is available for women with menopause, and the guideline outlines a range of treatment options including Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

In December 2019, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists published [Better for Women](#) which calls for a life course approach to women's health. This report included a section on general health during and after the menopause, and support for women with menopausal symptoms in the workplace.

In 2017, the Government Equalities Office published a [study reviewing the literature on menopause and the workplace](#). In May 2021, the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) published a [guide to managing menopause at work](#) which sets out some best practice in this area.

The Government is seeking views to help inform the development of a Women's Health Strategy. The consultation period runs for 14 weeks and closes at 11:45pm on 13 June 2021 (DHSC, [Women's Health Strategy: Call for Evidence](#), 1 May 2021).

The following sources provide more information on the support available to women experiencing menopausal symptoms:

- NHS, [Menopause](#)
- Women's Health concern, [Factsheet: The menopause](#), November 2020
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, [Menopause and women's health in later life](#)
- [The British Menopause Society](#)

2

Statistics

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and current estimates suggest that the average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK is 51 years (Source: [NHS: Menopause information](#)). With around 5.1 million women in the UK aged between 45 and 55 years, a large range of women are potentially menopausal (Source: [ONS population estimates for mid-2019](#)). NICE note that an estimated 1.5 million women – around 80% of those going through menopause – experience common symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats (Source: NICE, [Menopause: diagnosis and management](#)).

The Government's 2017 review of [Menopause transition effects on women's economic participation](#) noted that increased rates of employment among women aged 50 and above mean that up to 47% of the UK workforce will experience menopause transition during their working lives. Their review of available evidence suggested that estimates of the proportion of women negatively affected by menopausal symptoms at work range from 10% to 53%.

In some cases, menopausal conditions are severe enough to result in hospital admission. Around 16,000 women were admitted to hospital in England in 2019/20 with conditions associated with the menopause. (Source: [NHS Digital admitted patient care](#))

3 Parliamentary Material

3.1 Debates

[Women's Health Strategy](#)

8 March 2021 | House of Commons | 690 cc535-548

[International Women's Day](#)

10 March 2020 | House of Lords | 802 cc936-1094

[NHS Menopause Services](#)

13 Feb 2019 | House of Commons | 654 cc994-1006

[World Menopause Day](#)

18 Oct 2018 | House of Commons | 647 cc842-872

3.2 Parliamentary Questions

[Menopause](#)

02 Jun 2021 | 4580

Asked by: Robert Halfon

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that women who are diagnosed with early menopause are (a) referred to specialists and (b) receiving regular checks.

Answering member: Ms Nadine Dorries | Department: Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for menopause were updated in December 2019 and include criteria for the diagnosis, investigation and treatment of early menopause. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect all providers to give due regard to NICE's guidance.

After diagnosis has been confirmed in primary care, women with premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) or early menopause are generally referred to a specialist menopause clinic. The clinic will conduct further tests and, where appropriate, women will be offered treatment and fertility advice. After the

initial consultations, women with POI should be reviewed after three months to assess the efficacy of their treatment. Further appointments should then be tailored to the needs of the individual.

Menopause

19 May 2021 | 1043

Asked by: Robert Halfon

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to raise awareness of the difficulties that women experience as a result of menopause.

Answering member: Ms Nadine Dorries | Department: DHSC

From September 2020, relationships, sex education and health education became compulsory in all state funded schools. As part of this pupils are taught about menstrual health and the menopause. On 8 March, the Government launched a 14-week call for evidence as part of the Women's Health Strategy for England. The online survey within the call for evidence seeks information on the menopause. By understanding women's experiences, we can ensure key parts of the health service are meeting women's needs.

Menopause

17 May 2021 | 681

Asked by: Robert Halfon

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support women who have been diagnosed with early menopause.

Answering member: Ms Nadine Dorries | Department: DHSC

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for menopause were updated in December 2019 and include clear criteria for the diagnosis, investigation and treatment of early menopause. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect all providers to give due regard to NICE guidance.

Treatment for early menopause usually involves Hormone Replacement Therapy or a combined hormonal contraceptive pill both for relief of symptoms and to prevent against the long-term consequences of oestrogen deficiency. Women diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency are generally managed in a specialised menopause clinic and should have regular reviews to assess the efficacy of treatment and to be offered fertility advice if appropriate. NHS.UK provides signposting to a range of counselling and support groups, such as the Daisy Network and to fertility support groups, where necessary.

Ovarian Cancer: Menopause

11 Nov 2020 | 98968

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has with (a) the Royal College of Nursing and (b) other relevant bodies on potential links between ovarian cancer and the start of menopause.

Answering member: Jo Churchill | Department: DHSC

No discussions with the Royal College of Nursing, or other organisations, have taken place regarding the link between ovarian cancer and the start of the menopause.

Research suggests women with ovarian cancer may experience early menopause due to disease infiltration of the ovaries or because of the surgery or adjuvant therapy that they need to have to remove the cancer.

Women are advised to contact their general practice if they have any symptoms or concerns.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

03 Aug 2020 | 73707

Asked by: Steve McCabe

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) safety of using alternatives to Hormone Therapy Replacement patches.

Answering member: Jo Churchill | Department: DHSC

We have been working closely with all suppliers of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) preparations to maintain overall supply to patients. Supplies of alternative HRT products continue to remain available and the situation has been improving steadily since the end of February 2020.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made an assessment of the clinical and cost effectiveness of HRT, including transdermal patches, and has made recommendations on their use in its guideline on menopause: diagnosis and management [NG23].

The safety and efficacy of individual products that are authorised for the relief of oestrogen deficiency symptoms associated with the menopause are assessed at the time each product is licensed and safety is continuously monitored once it is on the market.

Most post-marketing studies examine the safety of HRT products as a group and the safety of HRT products as a class has been kept under continuous review by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in conjunction with its independent scientific advisory body, the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) and its Expert Advisory Group on Medicines for Women's Health. Likewise, the safety of licensed medicines and herbal products that are used as alternatives to HRT are continuously monitored by the MHRA and advice sought from the CHM, as needed, when new safety issues arise.

Employment: Menopause

02 Mar 2020 | 21351

Asked by: Alex Norris

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps the Government has taken to encourage employers to support women in the workplace that are experiencing menopause by (a) training staff to provide support, (b) raising awareness and (c) providing transition-related advice.

Answering member: Elizabeth Truss | Department: Women and Equalities

The Government is committed to supporting working women at all stages of their lives and enabling them to reach their potential.

We have worked with businesses and academics to highlight the role employers can play in supporting women going through menopause transition, including setting out practical actions employers can take. This work also sits alongside other policies and programmes, such as flexible working, which can help everyone remain economically active as long as they choose to.

Menopause

13 Feb 2020 | 14605

Asked by: Ms Harriet Harman

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure (a) all health care practitioners are trained in menopause and (b) that menopause guidance is introduced into workplaces in England.

Answering member: Caroline Dinanage | Department: DHSC

To help ensure women receive the best possible care, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published a guideline on the diagnosis and treatment of menopause in November 2015. This set out the support,

information and treatments needed to address the often debilitating symptoms that women suffer.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and the Royal College of General Practitioners also have important roles to play in relation to awareness of, and clinical practice relating to, menopause. Recently in December 2019, the RCOG published 'Better for Women' which calls for a life course approach and includes a focus on general health during and after the menopause.

We encourage employers to rise to the challenge by creating supportive and flexible ways to help those living with these conditions.

Whilst curricula for training healthcare professionals do not necessarily highlight specific conditions for them to be aware of, they do emphasise the skills and approaches that professionals must develop in order to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients.

4 Press Material

4.1 News Articles

The following is a selection of news and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

[Helping and supporting staff to manage menopause symptoms at work](#)

Nursing Times

1 June 2021

[Menopause study to uncover impact on senior women in the City](#)

The Guardian

19 May 2021

[HRT for women with menopause symptoms is unfairly seen as dangerous – in reality, it can make us healthier](#)

i News

12 May 2021

[Mission menopause: ‘My hormones went off a cliff – and I’m not going to be ashamed’](#)

The Observer

9 May 2021

[A third of women hide menopause symptoms at work – report](#)

The Guardian

8 March 2021

[Breaking the silence around the menopause](#)

The Financial Times [subscription required]

4 February 2021

Disclaimer

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing '[Legal help: where to go and how to pay](#)' for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

Feedback

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at commonslibrary.parliament.uk. If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on commonslibrary.parliament.uk.

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe or scan the code below:



 commonslibrary.parliament.uk

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)