

# let's pause and talk menopause



## The Menopause: An Awareness Guide

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# Foreword

We have a predominately female workforce that faces longer working lives. It is important that our staff seek & receive support to maintain their health & wellbeing.

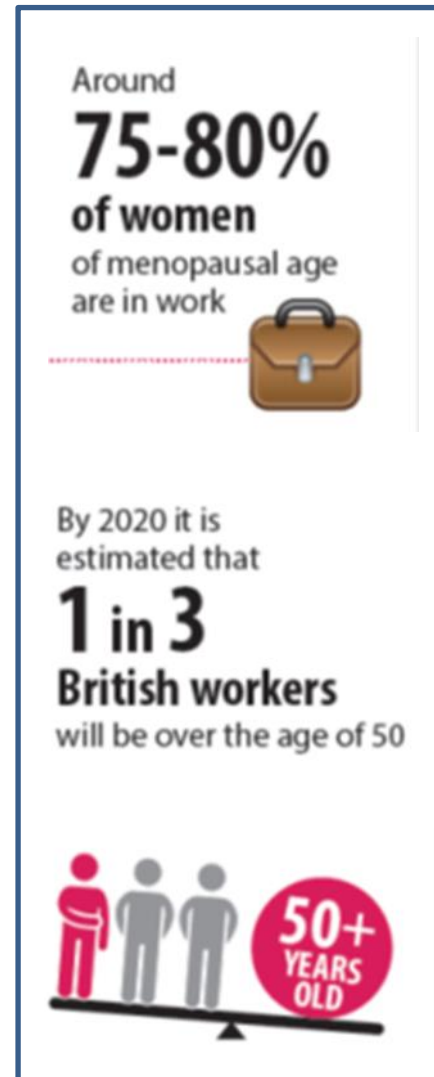
The menopause is a natural phase in every woman's life, yet there is very little awareness or discussion about it in society & in the workplace.

This tool is designed to provide staff with information to help understand & manage the symptoms of the menopause & provide guidance on the support they can seek out themselves or from their manager, colleagues, Occupational Health/ GP.

## SHSCT Menopause Policy

Details of the Trust's [Menopause Policy](#) published in September 2020 and related literature are also provided.

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# What is the menopause?

‘The menopause is when a woman stops having periods as she reaches the end of her natural reproductive life.

This is not usually abrupt, but a gradual process during which women experience [perimenopause](#) before reaching post menopause.

The age at which menopause occurs varies widely and 1:100 women experience premature ovarian insufficiency (menopause occurring before the age of 40 years).’

([NICE, NG23](#))



The average  
age for women to  
reach menopause  
in the UK is

**51** years

# Symptoms

Symptoms can be classed into the following categories:

- **vasomotor** (eg hot flushes and sweats)
- **musculoskeletal** (eg joint and muscle pain)
- **effects on mood** (eg low mood)
- **urogenital** (eg vaginal dryness)
- **sexual difficulties** (eg low sexual desire)



Evidence indicates that approximately

**20-25% of women**

will have hot flushes which adversely affect their perceived quality of personal and working lives

Prolonged lack of estrogen affects the bones & cardiovascular system & postmenopausal women are at increased risk of a number of long-term conditions, such as osteoporosis.

**For support and information see:**

[Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke](#)  
[Royal Osteoporosis Society](#)

Symptoms of the menopause usually last

between **4** and **8** years



# Symptoms

Estrogen depletion associated with menopause causes irregular periods & has many other effects on the body. Common symptoms:-

hot flushes, night sweats, palpitations, dizzy spells, sleep disturbance, fatigue, headaches

mood changes (anxiety, panic attacks, edginess, feeling irritable/irrational, memory & concentration loss, poorer cognition, low mood, depression, loss of confidence/self-esteem)

vaginal dryness, a lack of interest in sex, headaches, joint & muscle stiffness, dry/itchy skin, brittle nails, dry eyes, lank hair, need to urinate more often.

Quality of life & relationships, may be severely affected.

Some women experience severe symptoms while others are less affected.

# Symptoms

## Personal Stories from Women

You can find out about the experience of the menopause, by listening to women share their [personal stories on film](#).



[Researchers](#) travelled all around the UK to talk to 46 women in their own homes as they spoke about:

- memory and concentration
- hormone-replacement therapy (HRT)
- relationships & sex.


This initiative received a 'Highly Commended' award from the British Medical Association Patient Information Awards - 2011.

## Webinars

A library of webinars is available from: [www.imsociety.org/videos\\_library.php](http://www.imsociety.org/videos_library.php) providing video lectures on menopause topics.



# Perimenopause



**Changes before the Change**

**Perimenopausal bleeding**

Although some women may abruptly stop having periods leading up to the menopause, many will notice changes in patterns and irregular bleeding. Whilst this can be a natural phase in your life, it may be important to see your healthcare professional to rule out other health conditions if other worrying symptoms occur.

For further information visit [www.imsociety.org](http://www.imsociety.org)

**International Menopause Society**  
Promoting education and research on menopause's health

International Menopause Society, PO Box 751, Cornwall TR2 4WD  
Tel: +44 01726 884 221 Email: [leetomkinsims@btinternet.com](mailto:leetomkinsims@btinternet.com)

## What is the Perimenopause?

The perimenopause is the period of time preceding and just after the menopause itself, it can last one to four years. Often the transition can even last longer, five to seven years.

This 7 page booklet was launched as part of World Menopause Day 2017

‘Changes before the Change’

← **Click on the picture** to open the booklet and learn more about perimenopause.

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# Premature / early menopause

Premature menopause occurs when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. About 1% of women experience premature menopause. It can happen naturally, or as a side-effect of some treatments. It is sometimes called premature ovarian failure, or primary ovarian insufficiency (POI).

See the [nhs choices page](#) for more information on the causes of premature menopause. POI is the theme of [World Menopause Day 2020](#), the IMS (International Menopause Society) has produced a guide on this topic.

Going through an early/premature menopause can be very difficult and upsetting for a woman as it can affect her physically, emotionally and psychologically. This experience means that they may have to confront decisions about infertility, hormone replacement therapy (HRT), ageing and long-term relationships years, if not decades earlier than their peers.

It is important to seek [help and advice](#) if you are experiencing this.

# Premature menopause

## Useful links for premature menopause

- **The Daisy Network** - is dedicated to providing information and support to women diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI), also known as Premature Menopause.

[www.daisynetwork.org.uk/](http://www.daisynetwork.org.uk/)

A number of webinars are available from this organisation.

- **Health Talk** - provides information about early menopause, including women talking about their own experiences (several useful video clips)

[www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/late-life/menopause/early-premature-menopause](http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/late-life/menopause/early-premature-menopause)



# What can help?

There are a number of approaches that may help you to manage your symptoms. It is important to explore these to find what might be right for you and to speak to a health professional about this. Learn more about these approaches via the [British Menopause Society](#)

It is also important to make time for some **self—care**

## You might consider:

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) ([see factsheet](#)) – speak to your GP about a referral. Speak to Occupational Health about CBT - this may be available via the Conditions Management Programme
- Complementary therapies ([see factsheet](#)) or Herbal medication
- Relaxation or [mindfulness techniques](#)
- Making healthier lifestyle choices (healthy eating, being more active, [stopping smoking](#), sensible [alcohol](#) consumption)
- Hormonal based therapies (HRT – hormone replacement therapy) ([various factsheets](#))

# What can help?

## Trouble Remembering?

Consider enrolling on an [ICT training](#) course via the Trust eg Microsoft Outlook (tasks, contacts), Microsoft One Note, are great for helping you stay more organised or use your phone/devices to their full potential, eg useful apps.



## Bullet Journaling - <http://bulletjournal.com/> or [Umatter](#)

A bullet journal is a customizable organization system. It can be your to-do list, sketchbook, notebook, and diary, but most likely, it will be all of the above. Some reported benefits of using a bullet journal include:

- Stops you having nagging feelings that you are always forgetting something
- Help you focus more on self-care
- You discover a new creative outlet
- Helps tap you into your sense of gratitude
- Helps you feel less pressure to be perfect



# Self-care

With busy lives and competing responsibilities we can sometimes just forget to take care of ourselves. Finding the time to take proper care of yourself can be hard.

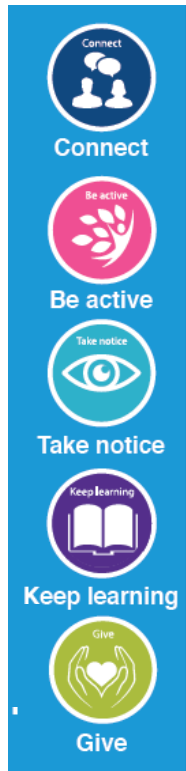
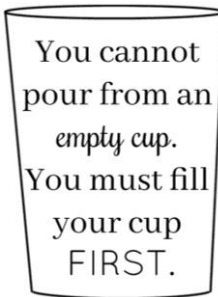
Self-care involves taking better care of yourself by scheduling in time alone, for exercise, and for fun. It isn't a one time deal but a constant repetition of many tiny habits, which together help soothe you and make you more able to live a healthier, happier and more balanced life – emotionally, physically and mentally.

The best way to do this is to implement tiny self-care habits every day. **See Umatter for more on [self-care](#).**

## Useful links

<https://tinybuddha.com/>  
[www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)  
[www.mindingyourhead.info](http://www.mindingyourhead.info)

*We're here for a good time not a long time!*



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# Screening

## What is screening?

[Screening](#) is a way of identifying apparently healthy people who may have an increased risk of a particular condition. The NHS offers a range of *screening* tests to different sections of the population. The aim is to offer *screening* to the people who are most likely to benefit from it. **It is important for women to attend breast and cervical screening appointments when called.**

The [breast screening programme](#) covers the whole of Northern Ireland. Women are invited by their GP practice every three years. A woman might be aged 50, 51 or 52 when she receives her first invite to attend – the first invitation will be before the age of 53.

The age range and interval for the NI [cervical screening programme](#) (from Jan 2011) now means that women aged 25-49 are invited for screening every three years, and those aged 50-64 every five years.

# If you are a carer

Many women going through the menopause find they have caring responsibilities at the same time. For some this could be a combination of children, grandchildren or their aging parents.

If you are a carer, speak to someone about what help and support is available. It is important that you do not dismiss or overlook your own health needs.

## Not sure if you are a Carer?

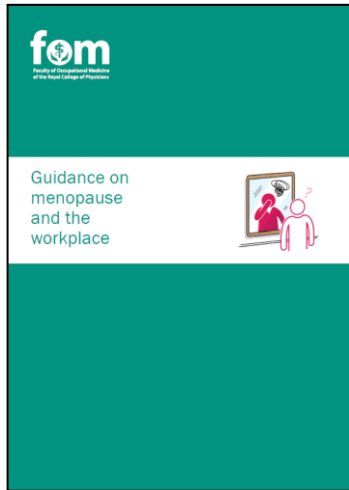
By definition you are a **Carer** if you regularly provide or intend to provide a substantial amount of care for a friend or relative who is in need of help because they are ill, frail, or have a disability.

**Check out Umatter** for further information on [caring and available supports](#) for carers.





# Menopause and work



## Guidance on the Menopause and the Workplace

This guide aims to help women experiencing troublesome menopausal symptoms, & to support them & their colleagues & managers in tackling the occupational aspects of menopausal symptoms. [← Click the cover to open](#)

It is important to recognise that the symptoms of the menopause can adversely affect the quality of both personal & working life. At work, they can cause embarrassment, diminish confidence & can be stressful to deal with eg poor concentration, tiredness, poor memory, feeling low or depressed, feelings of stress.

## Free Counselling/Wellbeing Hub - Inspire Wellbeing

Southern Trust staff can access free information and confidential support via the **Inspire Wellbeing Counselling Service** Tel: 0808 800 0002 and through the [Inspire Wellbeing Hub](#). (Formerly Carecall)

# Menopause toolkit

## (Business in the Community)

### Understanding the Menopause - A Guide for Managers

This **seven minute video** is designed to help line managers understand the symptoms and issues women face when managing the menopause. It also suggests potential actions managers can take to support their employees. [here](#)



## Managing Symptoms of the Menopause - A Guide for Women

This **four minute video** is designed to help women understand the potential symptoms of the menopause and encourages them to seek help from their line manager when needed.

[here](#)



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# Menopause toolkit

## (Business in the Community)

## The Menopause - HRT & Alternative Therapies

This **four minute video** focuses on the pros and cons of HRT and Alternative Therapies.

here



## The Menopause - Signposts to Additional Support

This **interactive document** provides a range of clickable links that signpost users to a variety of sources. These are of benefit to women and line managers.

here



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# SHSCT Menopause Policy

Published in September 2020, the Trust's Menopause Policy was developed in line with Trust key principles for policy development.

It aims to ensure that the Trust provides supportive working environments and a consistent approach to support women experiencing adverse peri-menopause/ menopause related symptoms at work.

## Objectives of the Policy

- To provide guidance to increase staff and managers awareness about the menopause, related symptoms and the potential impact for women at work
- To provide guidance on facilitating supportive conversations between managers and staff about menopause related symptoms impacting on health, wellbeing and capacity at work.

## **Menopause** **An Awareness Guide** **For Trust Staff**



# SHSCT Menopause Policy

This policy is supported by guidance notes for both **managers** and **staff** which should be read in conjunction with the policy, together with **additional sources of support** for staff and managers.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the SHSCT. The policy takes account of all relevant legislation requirements, Trust Policies and terms and conditions of employment. The policy and guidance also took account of trade union guidance on Menopause at work.

## Accessing the policy

The policy is available on [SharePoint](#) and via the new **SHSCT Connect App**.



# Speaking to your manager/GP/OH

**Manager** - Regular, informal conversations between you & your manager may enable you to have a discussion about any changes in your health, including issues relating to the menopause. It may be valuable simply to acknowledge this is a normal stage of life. Such conversations can identify support at work that can help you. Our policy provides information on *how to have this conversation*.

**GP** - Discuss your health concerns & treatment options with your GP.

Ask your GP about the [Read Yourself Well](#) scheme available in all public libraries.

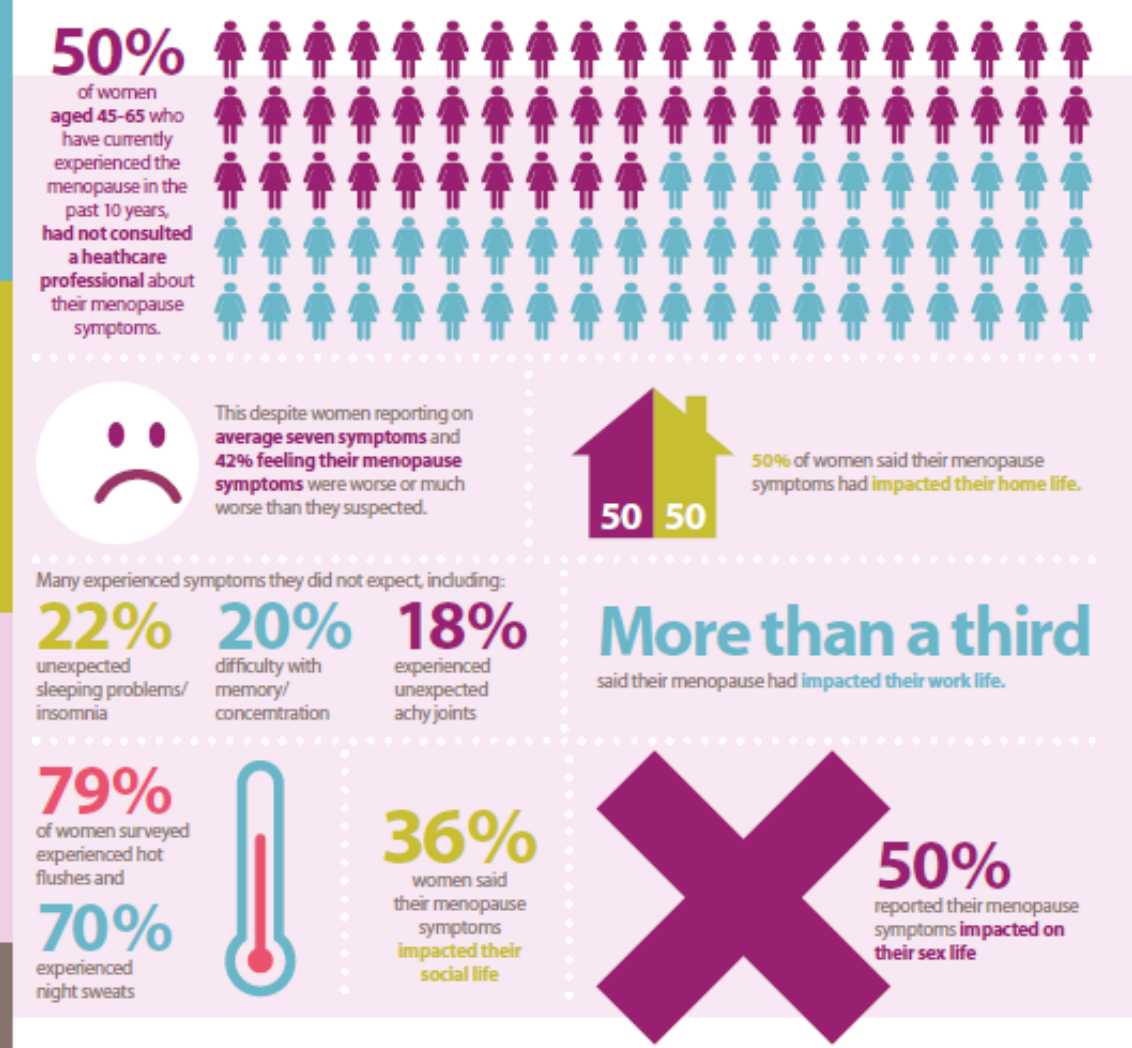


**Occupational Health** - If you are reluctant to have discussions about your experience of the menopause with your manager, in these cases it can be very helpful to speak to **Trust's Occupational Health Team**

**Tel:** 028 3756 4800 [Occupational.Health@southerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:Occupational.Health@southerntrust.hscni.net)



# Research



In May '16, a survey on behalf of the British Menopause Society, revealed that 1:2 women in GB (aged 45-65) who went through the menopause in the past 10 years **DID SO without consulting a healthcare professional.**

This is despite women surveyed reporting on average 7 different symptoms & 42% saying their symptoms were worse or much worse than expected.

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# Latest news

The issue of the menopause has featured in the news lately.  
To read the latest click on the image below

or visit [www.u-matter.org.uk/](http://www.u-matter.org.uk/)



**World Menopause Day  
18 October 2018**

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# Latest news

[NHS Staff Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partnership Group – Guidance on Menopause at Work](#) (Mar/2020)

[Trust Supports World Menopause Day with Launch of New Leaflets and Information Tool](#)  
(SHSCT, Oct/2018)

[Trust Staff Enjoy Chat, Complementary Therapies and Mindfulness on World Menopause Day](#) (SHSCT, Oct/2019)

[Workplaces 'should cater for menopause as they do for pregnancy'](#)  
(Jan/18) (The Guardian)

[BBC Woman's Hour – The menopause](#)

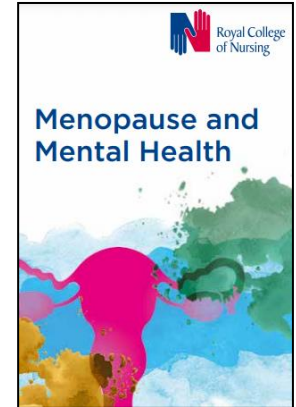
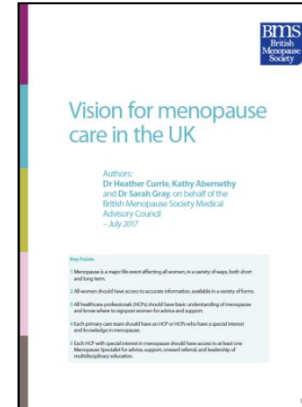
A series exploring its impact on women's work and relationships, and potential treatments. Includes 9 tips to help you cope with the menopause **(2018)**

[Employers urged to 'normalise' menopause in the workplace](#)  
(Jan/2018) (BBC News)

[The menopause: everything you were too afraid to ask](#)  
(Nov/2016) (The Telegraph)

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# Useful reading / viewing / listening



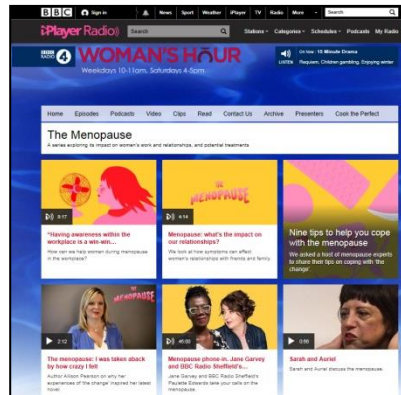
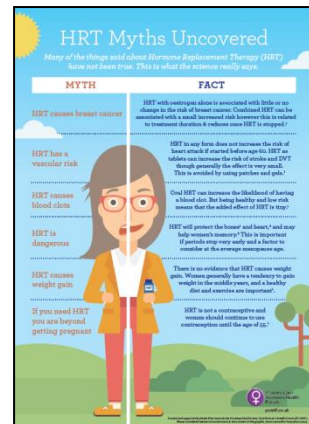
[Unison Factsheet](#)

[British Dietetic Association – Food Factsheet](#)

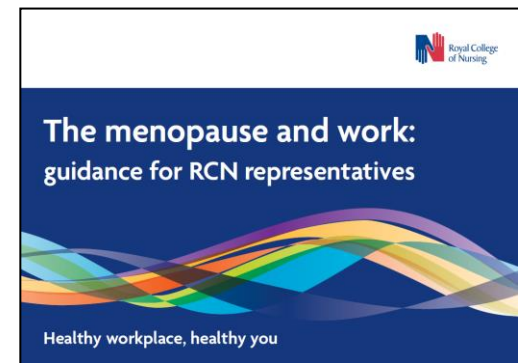
[NICE – Menopause Quality Standard](#)

[British Menopause Society Vision](#)

[Menopause and Mental Health](#)



The M Word Campaign launched by ITV presenter Lorraine Kelly, with input from Dr Hilary Jones and Dr Louise Newson



[Primary Care Women's Health Forum](#)

[BBC Woman's Hour](#)

[www.itv.com/lorraine/the-m-word](http://www.itv.com/lorraine/the-m-word)

[Royal College of Nursing](#)

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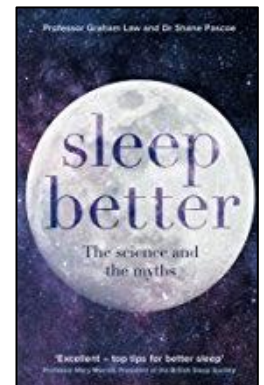
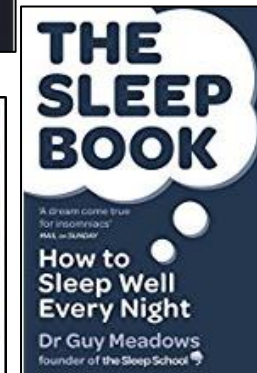
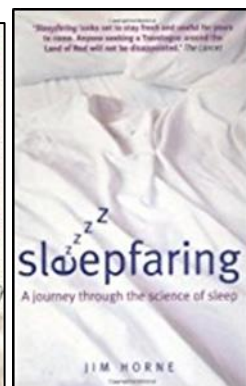
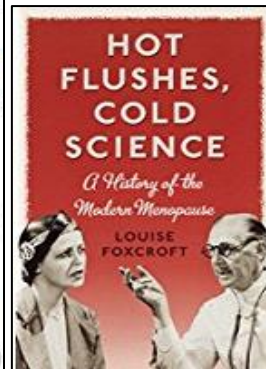
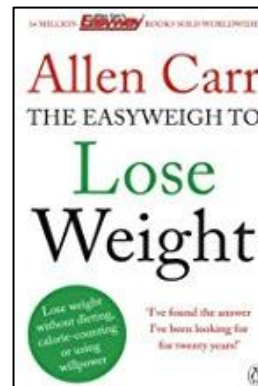
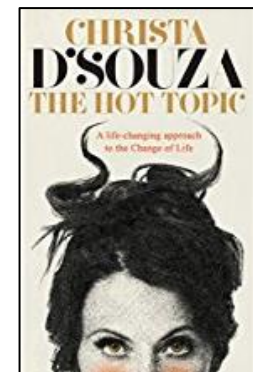
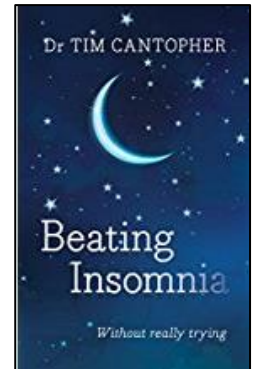
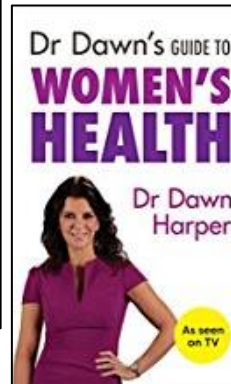
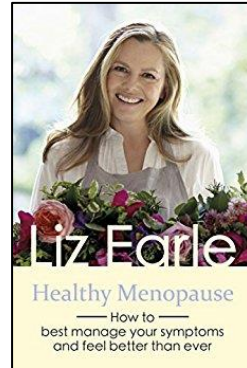
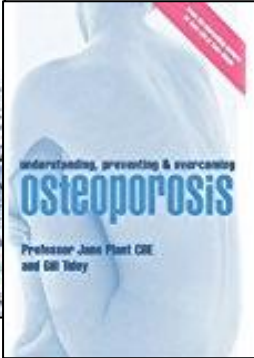
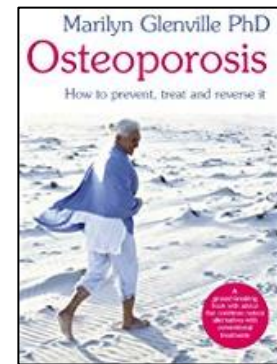
# Help from your local library



Meet  
**Libby.**

Visit your local library or download an ebook on the menopause via [Libraries NI](#) Download the **Free Libby** app from the App Store.

The titles below are available in hardcopy via the **Read Yourself Well Scheme**



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# Useful links

- International Menopause Society [www.imsociety.org/](http://www.imsociety.org/)
- British Menopause Society [www.thebms.org.uk/](http://www.thebms.org.uk/)
- Royal Osteoporosis Society [www.theros.org.uk](http://www.theros.org.uk)
- Manage My Menopause [www.managemymenopause.co.uk/](http://www.managemymenopause.co.uk/)
- RCN Peer Support (Menopause) (RCN members only)  
[www.rcn.org.uk/membership/member-support-services/peer-support-services](http://www.rcn.org.uk/membership/member-support-services/peer-support-services)
- Women's Health Concern [www.womens-health-concern.org/](http://www.womens-health-concern.org/)
- NHS Choices (Menopause) [www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/)
- Menopause View - [www.menopauseview.com/](http://www.menopauseview.com/) (**Free App**)
- Menopause Doctor <https://menopausedoctor.co.uk/videos/>



## Menopause and the Workplace

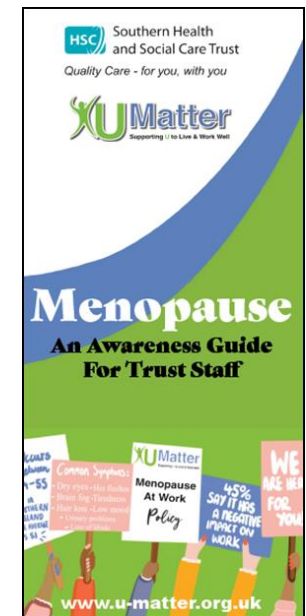
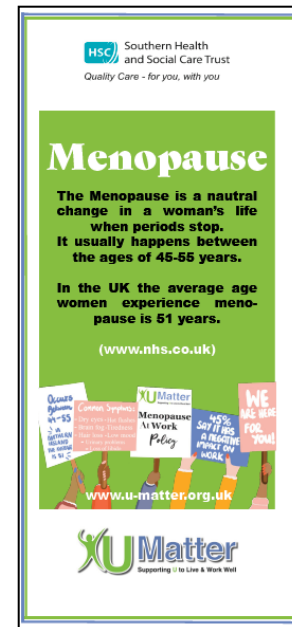
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians  
[www.fom.ac.uk/](http://www.fom.ac.uk/)



# Umatter website

In April 2018 the Trust launched the [Umatter website](#). This online tool is a central source of health and wellbeing information for Trust staff. The site can be **accessed at home and work** and contains **a dedicated section on Menopause including the two leaflets below:**

- over 900 health topics
- health assessment tools
- video clips
- a news section
- an events section
- Trust based supports for staff
- Trust policies related to health & wellbeing
- Information about the Trust's [workplace champions](#).



# World Menopause Day

World Menopause Day is held each year on the 18th October to raise awareness of midlife women's health. Each year a new theme is chosen and new information posters and booklets are produced. The booklets & posters below are available from [u-matter](mailto:u-matter) or [www.imsociety.org/](http://www.imsociety.org/)

