



# Let's Talk about the Menopause at University of Sunderland

**Employer:** University of Sunderland

**Area:** Sunderland

**Theme:** Menopause



Many of today's women workers are, or will be, working through a rarely discussed stage of life: the menopause. There will be thousands of women who will experience key symptoms such as hot flushes, irregular periods, mood swings, anxiety and poor memory while still holding down a full-time job.

It is known that most women are unwilling to disclose menopause related health problems at work particularly with male line managers and we did not want this to be the case here at the University of Sunderland. The Stress & Wellbeing group was passionate to break down those barriers and planned to do this in a fun, informative and effective way!

Time and time again from previous health activity evaluation forms staff highlighted they were interested in this topic being covered at work and therefore we were aware there was real interest.

Looking at the age profile of our workforce we established that 45% of our female staff fall within the age range 40 - 55 years which covers both perimenopause and menopausal women.

Menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45- 55 years and by 2020 it is estimated that 1 in 3 British workers will be over the age of 50 years. In addition to managing potential menopausal symptoms a quarter of women aged 50 – 64 have informal caring responsibilities and in late middle – age are often caught between generations of family members requiring care, parents and in-laws, spouses or partners, children or grandchildren.

This therefore became one of our top priorities to cover in this Academic year 17/18 with the Stress & Wellbeing group managing to secure funding to put on a Let's Talk about the Menopause workshop in September as part of Menopause Awareness Month delivered by Laughology. The workshop was delivered by Kerry Leigh who brought humour to the session using her stand-up comedian skills.



The workshop was advertised to all staff both men and women with a particular interest in engaging with Line Managers to help with raising awareness of the menopause. Vogel was contacted to see if they could offer any support with our event and we were delighted to receive lots of information and free samples of Menopause support this was packed into our Wellbeing bags along with other literature covering HRT information.

The workshop proved very popular with staff with a good mixture of attendees from our Support and Academic staff with some feedback as follows:

*“Sharing experiences and enjoying the laughter moments”*

*“Lovely environment, great positive approach which I really connected with.”*

*“Changing negative attitudes to positive /accepting attitudes is the way forward.”*

*“Learnt of the varying symptoms that I was previously unaware of.”*

*“Importance of feeling comfortable in the workplace to discuss the menopause, thankfully this is fine in the office in which I work.”*

*“Embed knowledge about the menopause into regular discussions, work/family. I will ensure that I speak to staff*

### **Linda Appleby, Payroll & Benefits Coordinator shares her experiences;**

The perimenopause hit me out of the blue. I had heard women talking about it but thought it couldn't be that bad. How wrong could I be? My symptoms have got steadily worse and my migraines have increased along with heavy, painful, increased bleeding, itchy and hot skin, aches and pains, not wanting to be sociable, feeling very emotional and an extremely low mood - which is so out of character for me. I have been struggling for quite some time now.

Working within the HR department and with Occupational health has been an absolute godsend for me. When it was advertised that there was to be a menopause session being made available to all members of staff I was so keen to attend.

Talking to other women who are going through the same thing made me feel like I was not going crazy and I felt so supported by this and by my colleagues. The session was very light-hearted and covered everything to do with the menopause.

This should be made available to all women and I feel so lucky that I have had the opportunity to attend such a brilliant session that has given me a greater knowledge and understanding of a subject some women would not normally talk about.

The support I have received from Occupational Health has been amazing and also the wider HR dept.

