

ASLEF

THE TRAIN DRIVERS UNION

More than
just a **union**

Best Practice Guidelines for
>>> **Menopause**

The Womens Representative Committee have developed this best practice guide to give assistance to branches and reps that may need to provide advice to female members.

The document details the ways members can be helped in the workplace. Although it should be recognised that this is a very personal experience and different levels of support may be needed.

Further information can be sought from the organisations listed at the end of the guide and members can always contact the representative for their district on the womens representative committee.

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BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR **MENOPAUSE**

What is Menopause?

The menopause is an occupational health issue and one that is growing in importance. Women are a relatively new addition to the train driving profession, but it is estimated that approximately a third of female train drivers are approaching or are already experiencing the menopause. This is something that ASLEF believes needs to be addressed.

Menopause is defined as the single point in time when menstruation has ceased for 12 consecutive months. The average age at which women reach the menopause is 51, but it normally ranges between 45 and 55. The period of hormonal change lasts, on average, about 6 years.

It may be accompanied by some or all of the following symptoms:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- sleep disturbances
- fatigue
- poor concentration and memory
- weight gain
- irritability
- mood disturbances
- skin dryness
- increased risk of osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease
- a lowering of self esteem which leads to poor psychological health
- depression because of a sense of loss of femininity of their own mortality.

What can employers do?

Employers have a responsibility to ensure the health and welfare of their employees, and they are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include any specific risks for women going through the menopause. They also have a duty not to discriminate under the 2010 Equalities Act.

As such women should be able to expect support and assistance during what is, for many, a very difficult time.

TOCs/FOCs should ensure that all line managers have been trained to be aware of how the menopause can affect work and what adjustments may be necessary to support women who are experiencing the menopause.

TOCs/FOCs can ensure that, as part of a wider occupational health awareness campaign, issues such as the menopause are highlighted so all staff know that the employer has a positive attitude to the issue, and it is not something that women should feel embarrassed about. Guidance on how to deal with the menopause should be freely available in the workplace.

Company Intranet, if one is available, should have information relating to the menopause in their 'Women's Health Section'

All women should be given information of how they can get support for any issues that arise as a result of the menopause. Because of the way that society treats the menopause, many women will feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, especially if it is a man, and other options should be available such as Occupational Health, Trade Union Representatives and Equalities Representatives



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Sickness absence procedures should make it clear that they are flexible enough to cater for menopause - related sickness absence. Women should experience no detriment because they may need time off during this time.

Working time arrangements should be flexible enough to ensure that they meet the needs of menopausal women, who may need to leave suddenly. They may also need more breaks during the day.

Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. Issues that need looked at include temperature and ventilation. The assessments should also address welfare issues such as toilet facilities and access to cold water.

Uniforms should be made from natural fibres. Manmade fibres can exacerbate hot flushes and sweating

What can ASLEF do?

Ensure that Equality Representatives have a good understanding of menopause and its effects.

Support women who feel they have been discriminated against because they are menopausal.

Encourage all representatives to treat women who are suffering because of the menopause with respect and understanding.

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How can women help themselves?

Women should be proactive in researching their own symptoms. There is lots of information online at sites like NHS Direct.

Some steps which women can take to help themselves are:

Try to eat healthily, research has shown that a balanced healthy diet can help alleviate some symptoms.

Eat regularly

Wear natural fibres

Exercise regularly

Consult with own GP on management of the menopause.

Consult with a pharmacist about vitamins and supplements which may help alleviate symptoms.

Speak to Occupational Health or a trusted manager about your symptoms.

Carry a bottle of water

Carry a mini fan or a can of 'Magicool' which will help with hot flushes and sweating.

Helpful websites

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

http://www.womens-health-concern.org/help/focuson/focus_dietmenopause.html

http://www.womens-health-concern.org/help/factsheets/fs_menopause.html

<http://www.project-aware.org/Managing/exercise.shtml>