

Menopause and Mental Health

Session Plan

Session	Menopause and Mental Health
Background Information	Menopause has been treated as a somewhat taboo subject over the years. Statistics suggest that 45% of women say they feel their menopause symptoms have had a negative impact on their work, whilst almost a quarter report feeling isolated. It's not only those who identify as women who will experience menopause. Some transgender men, non-binary people and intersex people or people with variations in sex characteristics may also experience menopause. It's important to realise that the mental symptoms of menopause are as real as the physical ones. Having conversations about the menopause and the impact it can have on both physical and mental health, can help normalise conversations, reduce stigma and encourage women to seek help if they are struggling.
Aim	To raise awareness of menopause and impact on mental health and wellbeing
Learning Outcomes	Participants will be able to 1. Dispel some of the myths surrounding menopause 2. Describe what the menopause is 3. Discuss the impact of menopause on mental health 4. Discuss what to look out for 5. Discuss the different ways to support mental health during menopause
Duration	• 1.5 hours
Resources	• IT • Quiz • Presentation • Flipchart/pens • Session handout • Evaluation

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Learning outcomes	Participant Activity	Resources	Time
1. Dispel some of the myths surrounding menopause	• Myth buster	Quiz	10 min
2. Describe what the menopause is	• Menopause definition	Flipchart Pens Slide	10 min
3. Discuss the impact of menopause on mental health	• Body Map	Flipchart Pens Slide	20 min
4. Discuss what to look out for	• The Signs	Flipchart Pens Slide	15 min
5. Discuss the different ways to support mental health during menopause	• Self-help and Services	Slide Handout	20 min
6. Looking after our own mental health	• Self-care	Slide	5 min
7. Reflection and session close	• Reflection	Evaluation	5 min

Menopause and Mental Health

Facilitator notes

Slide	Notes	Time	Resources
1	Welcome participants and introduce yourself before offering an overview of the session. Have the title slide up and visible whilst doing this. Emphasise that the session today is merely an introduction to mental health and menopause. This session is not intended to make people experts but offer a basic awareness and understanding of menopause, the impact it can have on mental health and what support can look like during this period. Equality: It is important at this stage to highlight that it is not only those who identify as women who will experience menopause. Some transgender men, non-binary people and intersex people or people with variations in sex characteristics may also experience menopause. Keeping safe Reinforce this is a basic awareness session and does not allow for detailed discussion. If you are concerned about a participant's mental health and wellbeing and feel they may be in distress, their Doctor should be their first point of contact. If you feel the person's life is in immediate danger please call 999 for assistance. Online delivery Please refer to the Healthy Minds Online Guidance if you are facilitating a session online. Please refer participants to NHS Inform for all menopause information.	5 min	Slides
2	Put up the session overview slide and read out what will be covered today.		
Activity	Menopause Quiz Group or Individual Activity Let's start with exploring some of the knowledge and attitudes that surround the menopause. Distribute the quiz to participants. This can be done on an individual basis or as a group. Ask participants to complete the quiz, true or false. This is a good	10 min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Quiz

	starting point and gives an insight into the participants' knowledge and attitudes on the subject matter. Once completed, go through each of the questions of the quiz to generate discussion. Use the supporting statements to provide the correct answers and information. Discussion point: Were there any surprises? Summary: There are many myths that surround menopause. Today's session aims to help develop our knowledge and understanding of the topic and consider how we can support mental health during the menopause period.		
3	What is the menopause? Now we are going to explore "What is your understanding of menopause?" This can be done as a whole group discussion or divide participants into groups. Whole Group: put the question out and ask for comments. Take feedback Group activity: Divide the participants into groups and invite the groups to discuss the question. Each group should nominate a person to feedback on their discussion. Invite the groups to feedback their discussions. Share the "What is menopause?" slide. Acknowledge any similarities that groups may have discussed and shared that resonate with the definition shown. Share that menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age. It results when the ovaries (a female reproductive organ that produces eggs) completely stop producing reproductive hormones (these are chemicals produced and released by the body to regulate reproduction) and there are no monthly periods for a consecutive 12 months. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51. Reinforce this is an average age and for some women it is younger or older. Highlight that unless a girl has had her ovaries	10 min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Flipchart Pens

	removed before puberty or is born without reproductive organs, all women go through menopause. Symptoms and experiences can vary and is individual to each woman. Also refer to the quiz to remind participants that menopause can also occur due to certain surgeries or cancer treatments. This can sometimes cause symptoms to be more sudden and in some cases more severe. It is important to recognise that women under the age of 45 can also experience menopause for different reasons. Points to highlight: whilst there are both physical and psychological symptoms associated with menopause, for the purpose of this session, it will focus on the mental health impact only.		
4 & 5	Statistics The purpose of the statistics section is to give an overview of the impact menopause is having on women, partners and the workplace and why it is important to raise awareness and develop our understanding. Inform the participants we are going to a look at some statistics to help give us a picture of the impact menopause can have. Read the information off the slide. Discussion point: once you have read out the information, ask the participants what their thoughts and views are on the statistics, are they alarmed by them? Summarise: statistics provide a snapshot of the impact menopause can have on the individual, partners and wider implications such as the workplace and economy. It highlights the importance of talking about menopause and how we can support women, their partners, families and workplaces.	5 min	Slides
Activity & 6	How can menopause affect mental health? Group Activity We are moving on to explore how the menopause can impact on mental health. Divide participants into groups or assign to breakout rooms if delivering online.	15min (5 min activity, 10 min feedback)	Flipchart Pens

	Invite the groups to think about, discuss and write down how menopause can impact on mental health. Once completed, take feedback from each group, one/two examples from each. Bring up the slide to highlight some examples of the impacts on mental health, highlighting that this is not an exhaustive list. Remind participants that everyone's experience is individual to them. Highlight that these symptoms often do not exist in isolation and that many women may be affected by a range of these symptoms. Refer back to quiz to highlight the cultural dimension. In some cultures, discussions around women's health, like menopause and mental health are not encouraged and stigmatised, it may be that women are not used to talking about issues and they remain a hidden issue. This can further compound a woman's symptoms. Points to highlight: Note that physical symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats etc can also have an impact on mental health and can cause women to feel distressed. Summary: As highlighted throughout the session, all women's experiences can be different, there may be common symptoms, but the experience is personal to them and we need to be mindful when sourcing and offering support.		
Activity & 7	What to look out for? Group Activity So, we have looked at the impact menopause can have on mental health, now we are going to explore what signs might we look out for if we are concerned about someone's mental health who is going through menopause. Divide the participants into groups or assign to breakout rooms if online. Ask each group to discuss the above. Once the activity is completed, take feedback from each of the groups. Physical appearance can include changes such personal hygiene and grooming habits. Discussion: Bring up the slide to share signs to look out for. Acknowledge any similarities the groups have shared. Note that these signs are not exhaustive. It is recognising that there are	15 min (10 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Slide Flipchart Pens

	signs/changes you have noticed in the person that has prompted you to consider something may be going on for them. *Remember if you are concerned about an individual's mental health and wellbeing and feel they may be in distress, their GP should be their first point of contact, if you feel the individual is in immediate danger, please call 999*		
Activity & 8	Supports Group Activity This section of the session will explore what supports could be considered for those struggling with their mental health during the menopause. For the purpose of this activity, we have themed these into • Individual: what can we do as individuals to support those struggling with their mental health during the menopause • Society: what can society can be doing to normalise menopause and what support can look like. Put participants into groups or assign to breakout rooms and invite them to discuss the above. Once completed take feedback from each group, one/two examples from each. Once all groups have fed back, bring the slide up. Acknowledge any similarities the groups have come up with that resonate with the examples on the slide. Briefly go through each bullet point. Individual • Talking: reassure them you are there for them. Ask them what they want and need, don't assume. Encourage them to express their feelings • Listening: the most that someone may want is that you offer a listening ear • Peer Support: sharing your own experiences of menopause can be a powerful intervention and source of support and make the person feel less isolated and alone • Signposting: find out what services and supports are available that might be helpful to the individual Society • The statistics highlighted the impact	15 min (10 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Slide Flipchart Pens Menopause resources handout

	menopause can have and reports of unsupportive workplaces. Workplaces need to look to be supportive and flexible to meet the needs of women experiencing menopause. • World Menopause Day: takes place every year on 18th October. It is a great way to shine a spotlight on menopause and encourage women, partners and their families to seek support. Encourage your workplace/organisation/local community to get involved. • Access menopause literature to display across your organisation, local community, clinics, use digital platforms to display information to. • Be inclusive: include information for partners, consider culture differences, gender identity etc.		
9	Share some examples of suggested supports which have been themed into self-help and services. This is not an exhaustive list. Menopause Cafes: encourages people to gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause. Sleep hygiene: refers to habits and practices that are beneficial to sleeping well on a regular basis. Practicing good sleep hygiene can help improve our mental health. Online forums/information: the internet hosts a wealth of information and online chat forums. Helplines: there are a range of free helplines that can be accessed to support anyone struggling with their mental health. Doctor: For some women, menopausal symptoms can sometimes be severe and impact on their day-to-day life. Women should go to their GP if they are struggling. Counselling: can help individuals address their problems by helping them to develop strategies and increase self-awareness. Relationship Support Services: this can be a stressful time and put pressure on relationships, there are services that can offer relationship support. Sandyford Services: provide a specialist menopause clinic. Please note that this can only be accessed via a referral by your GP. Please speak	5 min	

	with your GP in the first instance who can refer. Highlight that supports can look different for everyone and that one size does not fit all. Individuals may choose different supports at different times through their menopause journey. They may also use more than one source of support at a time. Circulate the menopause resources handout, again highlight these are general and not an exhaustive list. Facilitators can adapt the resources handout to include any locality resources and supports. Conclude that it is important that we continue the conversation about menopause, despite the discomfort it may cause the few. The more we raise awareness and share experiences, the more normal it will become in society and encourage women to seek help if they are struggling.		
10	Remind the participants of the importance of looking after their own mental health and provide a self-care activity.	5 min	Slide
Session Close	Thank the participants for their time and ask them to complete an evaluation.	5 min	Evaluation