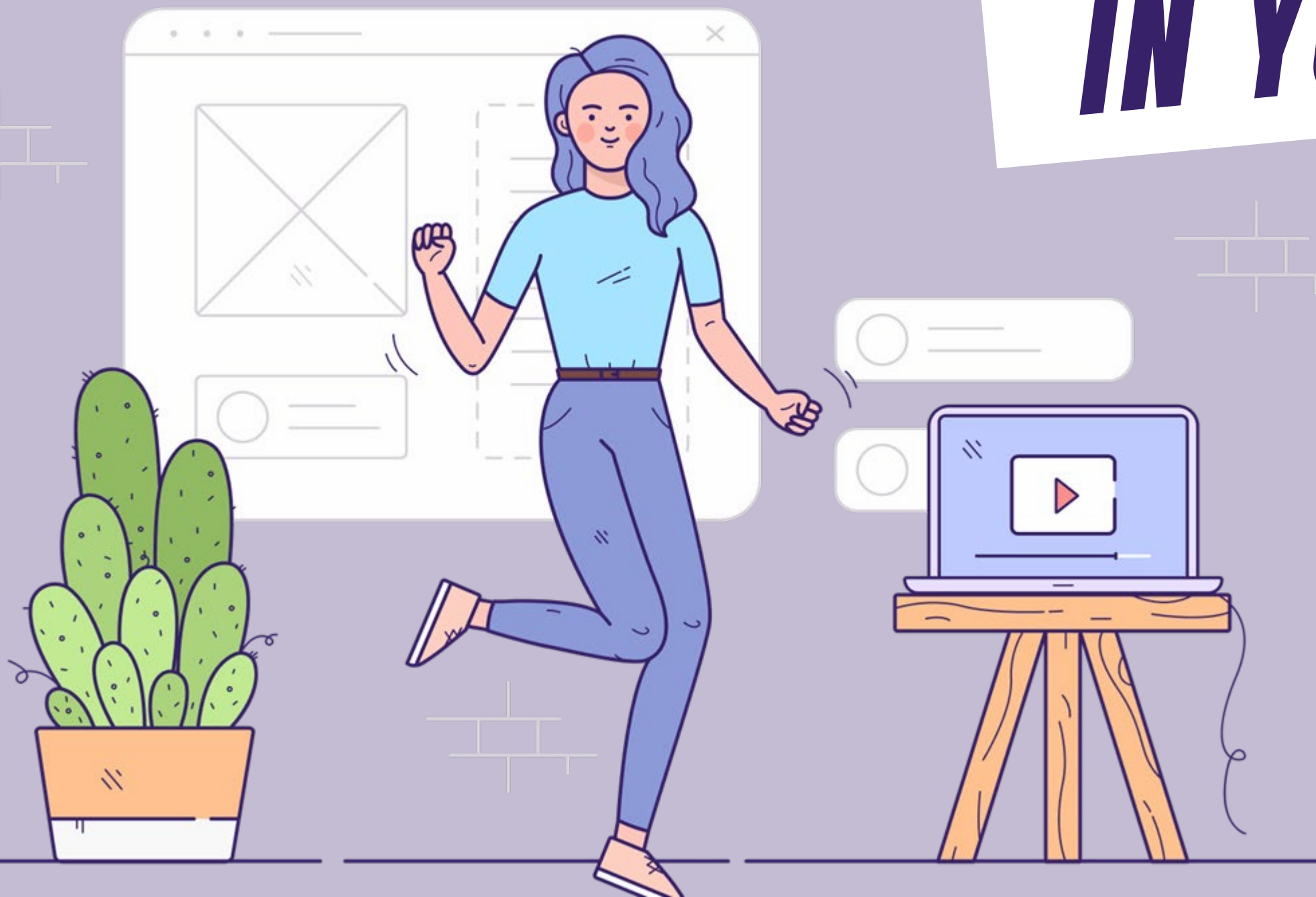


LET'S TALK ABOUT WOMEN'S HEALTH

***IN YOUR WORKPLACE***



In this report we ask the question: how can workplaces do more to support women's health? We're focussing on **menstrual health** – a hot topic given that the Health Secretary has just announced that menstrual problems and menopause are top priorities to be tackled under the 2024 Women's Health Strategy.

We believe that supporting **menstrual health conditions in the workplace**, such as the ones we explore in this report, enables staff to thrive, and allows businesses to succeed.

*"Helping women and girls who suffer from bad periods can make a huge difference to their lives, education and careers. These are issues that impact women, but they should not be seen as 'women's problems' - it is an everyone problem."*

Minister for Women's Health, Maria Caulfield



**Dr Alton Chew**

GP registrar for NHS Imperial College Hospital Trust & Clinical Advisor for SiSU Health UK

"In my practice, it pains me to see women of all ages suffering with menstrual-related issues, and even more so when they have not sought help despite years of suffering. There has to be a significant push towards education and normalising these topics so women can feel empowered in speaking up, seeking help, and support.

This document sheds some light on the most encountered menstrual health conditions, ones that are extremely amenable to lifestyle measures and patient education. It is imperative that we, as a society, begin to normalise (what is now) difficult conversations around women's health, and promote healthier living as it leads to an improvement in productivity and, most importantly, quality of life."

# What are premenstrual symptoms?

Most women experience symptoms in the 2 weeks before their menstrual period. Premenstrual Syndrome (**PMS**) is the name for this collection of symptoms. The most common symptoms are mood swings, feeling upset, anxious or irritable, tiredness or trouble sleeping, bloating or tummy pain, breast tenderness, headaches, spotty skin, greasy hair and changes in appetite and sex drive. Symptoms are cyclical in nature and they end at the beginning of a period, and are usually followed by a symptom-free week.

It's not fully understood why women get PMS. And not all women experience PMS in the same way. Some women may experience more severe symptoms of PMS, called pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder (**PMDD**). Symptoms are similar to PMS but are much more intense and can have a much greater negative impact on daily activities and quality of life.

In the UK, 40% of women experience PMS and approximately 2-3% (824,000 women) have PMDD. In those with PMDD, 593,600 will experience suicidal ideation, 412,000 will self-harm and 275,000 will attempt suicide ([University of the West of Scotland](#)). The most common age group affected are those between 25 to 45 years and it seems that an increase in age plays an important role in an increase in symptoms, whereas PMS generally improves with age.



# Create a period friendly workplace

The prevalence of PMS and its corollaries underscores the importance of providing comprehensive support in the workplace.

- Take premenstrual symptoms seriously, ensuring that policies and work arrangements don't disadvantage those with period issues.
- Raise awareness of period related issues, and encourage conversations, so team members know they can ask for support if they need it.
- Allow enough breaks for heavy periods, and perhaps provide a quiet space for breaks.
- Supply sanitary products if you can.
- Offer yoga or stress management classes to help lower cortisol and balance hormones.

Learn more about PMS & PMDD:

[National Association for Premenstrual Syndromes \(NAPS\)](#)

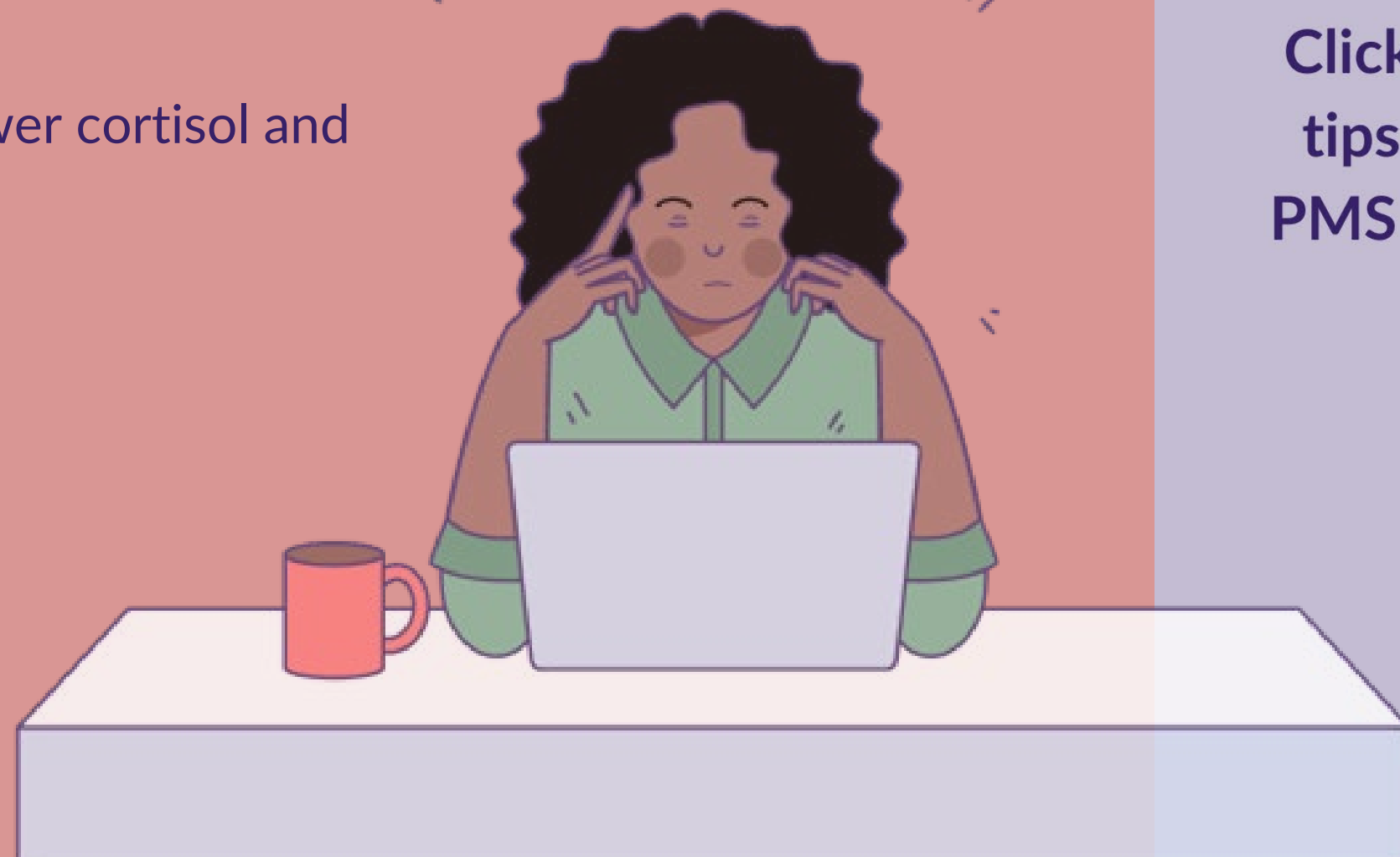
[Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist Patient Information Leaflet](#)

[Mind](#)

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PMS approaches



# Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

The endocrine system consists of the tissues (mainly glands) that create and release hormones. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is an endocrine condition that affects 1 in every 10 women in the UK and can be incredibly devastating to self-esteem and quality of life. PCOS is the combination of cysts on the ovaries and enlarged ovaries, plus the ovaries secreting excessive male sex hormones (testosterone) and irregular periods. A state of insulin resistance underpins PCOS and is found in many women with the condition, followed by ovaries being overworked and in conjunction with this, the risk of Type 2 Diabetes.

The condition manifests differently in each person, but symptoms usually include:

- Absent, irregular menstrual cycles
- Infertility
- Male pattern hair growth (facial hair, midline hair growth)
- Acne
- Acanthosis nigricans (areas of rough, dark, velvety skin around skin folds, an indication of insulin resistance)

PCOS is recognised as a major risk factor for the development of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease (CVD) in later life. Already we know that women in later life need to look after their heart health. SiSU Health UK health check data shows that 51% of women aged over 65 have an 'at risk' blood pressure, compared to only 11% in the age 16-24 bracket.

# Create a PCOS friendly workplace

The physical symptoms of PCOS and its impact on mental health can cause tiredness and exhaustion, resulting in a lack of focus at work or difficulty managing jobs and personal lives.

- #TurnItTeal - September is PCOS awareness month and your colleagues will appreciate the support of raising awareness
- Promote the protection of mental health through providing meditative classes, stress-relief strategies, and creating a positive environment (Oxford Academic)
- Obesity has been shown to increase the risk of severity - support women with weight management through health checks and exercise classes.
- SiSU Health UK data of women's health checks shows 54% fall into at risk Body Mass Index (BMI) categories.

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PCOS approaches



Learn more about PCOS:

PCOS Weight Loss

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG):

[https://www.rcog.org.uk/media/q5ijt5ur/pi\\_pcos\\_update-2022.pdf](https://www.rcog.org.uk/media/q5ijt5ur/pi_pcos_update-2022.pdf)

[https://www.rcog.org.uk/media/qmtlp2b0/gtg\\_33.pdf](https://www.rcog.org.uk/media/qmtlp2b0/gtg_33.pdf)

# Endometriosis

Despite affecting 1 in 10 women from puberty to menopause (that's 1.5 million in the UK), the majority of people do not know what endometriosis is and cannot name symptoms – which is surprising given that it's as common in women as diabetes and asthma.

Endometriosis is a long-term condition which sees tissue similar to the lining of the womb grow in other parts of the body, generally on organs in the pelvic cavity such as the ovaries, fallopian tubes and bowel. They respond to the ebb and flow of hormones produced during the reproductive cycle. Hence, pain can be worse during the time of the month, but **constant pain** is also a feature of endometriosis. This may have a devastating impact on a woman's education, personal and professional relationships, mental health, and quality of life.

It's difficult to treat as often invisible to the naked eye, but physical symptoms can be:

- Dysmenorrhea (severe, disabling, period pains)
- Pelvic pain that can be constant (and chronic), or cyclical (peaks during menses, then abates)
- Deep pain during or after sex (deep dyspareunia)
- Painful bowel movements, or bleeding from the back passage
- Pain when urinating, or haematuria (blood in the urine)
- Infertility in association with one or more of the above

Sadly, even after treatment, endometriosis can recur.



# Create an Endometriosis friendly workplace

The pain experienced during a period can make it impossible to attend work. 35% of women with endometriosis have a reduced income as a result of having the condition\* so clearly has a significant impact on workplace productivity.

- Endometriosis Awareness Month takes place in March (as well as International Women's Day) – support this event and also help improve the number of people in your workplace who can name symptoms of Endometriosis.
- Create health champions and specific communities for Endometriosis.
- Support requests for flexible working.

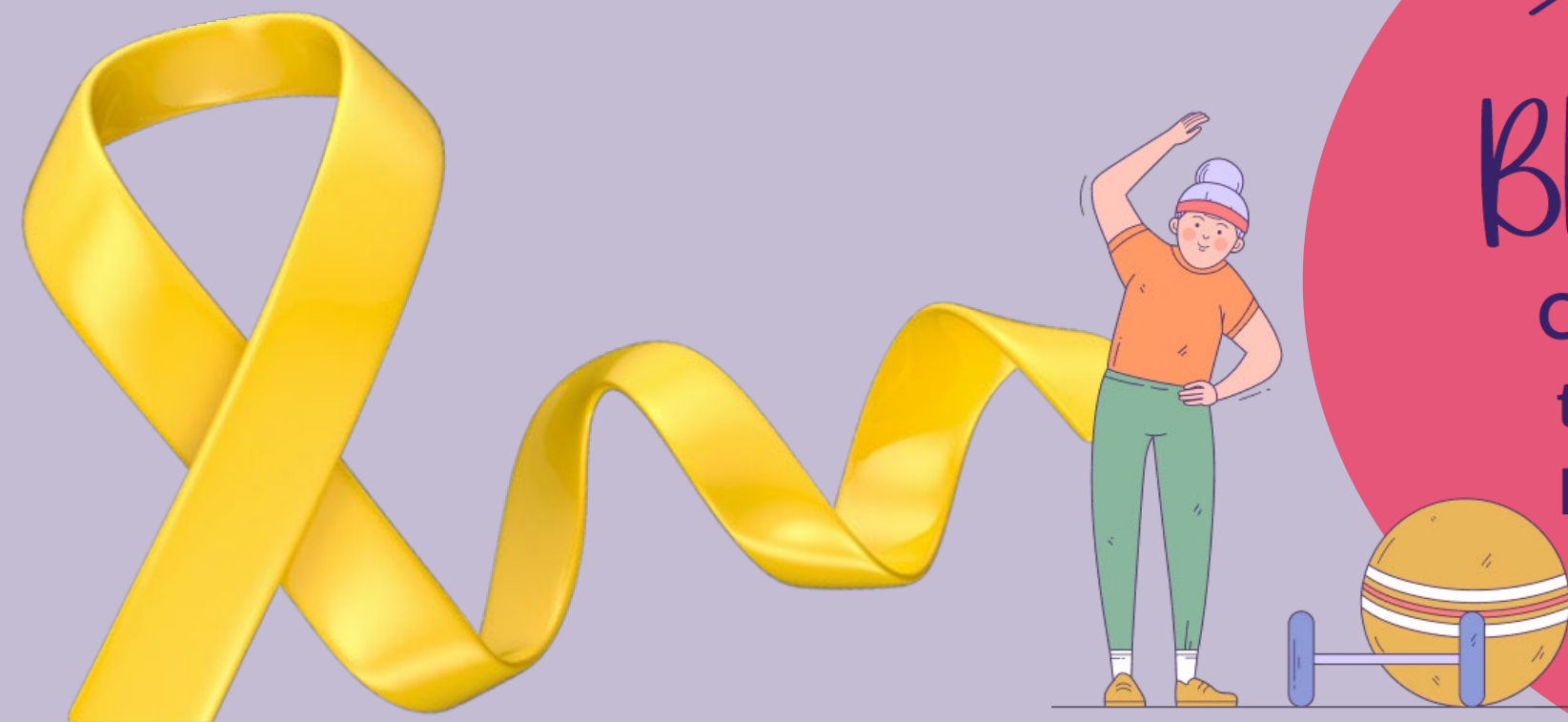
## Learn more about Endometriosis:

[\\*Endometriosis UK & All-Party Parliamentary Group](#)

[The Endometriosis Foundation](#)

[Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists \(RCOG\)](#)

[National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#)



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Endometriosis  
approaches



# Menopause

Menopause is when periods stop due to lower hormone levels. It usually affects women between the ages of 45 and 55, but it can happen earlier. It affects anyone who has periods, in 3 stages:

- 1 **Perimenopause** is the time when the body will naturally transition to menopause and this stage can last between four to ten years.
- 2 **Menopause** is the time when a woman no longer has periods and hasn't had one for twelve consecutive months.
- 3 **Post-menopause** is the final stage which usually occurs from age 55 onwards and most of menopausal symptoms will have ceased.

Menopausal symptoms affect 75% of women (British Menopause Society) and 6 out of every 10 women experiencing menopausal symptoms say it has a negative impact on their work. With the right support, women do not need to press pause, struggle through, or leave their careers during this natural transition (NHS).

Menopause is associated with secondary consequences such as osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease. SiSU Health UK data shows 38% of women over 45 have an 'at risk' blood pressure reading.

The severity and duration of symptoms vary. These are common symptoms (based on the Greene Climacteric Scale) that a woman may be feeling during the 3 stages:



- Heart beating quickly or strongly
- Felling tense or nervous
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling excitable
- Attacks of anxiety or panic
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling tired and lacking in energy
- Loss of interest in most things
- Feeling of unhappiness or depression
- Crying spells
- Irritability
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Tightness pressure in your head
- Parts of your body feel numb
- Headaches

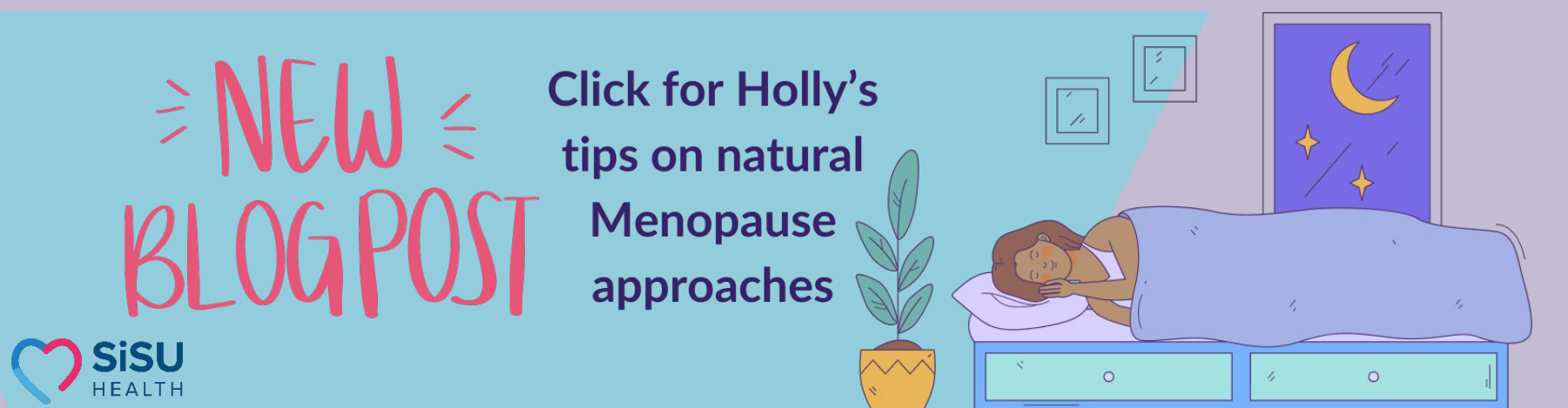


- Muscle aches and joint pains
- Loss of feeling in hands or feet
- Difficulty breathing
- Hot flushes
- Sweating at night
- Loss of interest in sex
- Pain during sex (dryness and thinning of the vaginal wall)
- Heavy periods/floods (during perimenopause)
- Urinary incontinence as tissues weaken from lack of oestrogen

# Create a Menopause friendly workplace

Many of your women could be suffering in silence, so let's break the stigma:

- World Menopause Day is held each year on **18 October** to raise awareness and share support available for improving health and wellbeing for those experiencing menopause.
- Introduce a women's health pledge to ensure women feel confident reaching out to their line managers.
- Be flexible & mindful. Someone struggling with memory issues, for example, may prefer a sit-down meeting where they can keep notes to a chat in the corridor. A colleague with brain fog might appreciate the chance to get out and have a walk in the fresh air. Temperatures should be adaptable.
- Supply sanitary products due to the floods that women can experience during the perimenopause and a very simple change of clothes (i.e. black leggings).
- It is important for women aged 40+ to be aware of their blood pressure, heart rate, and BMI given the cardiovascular risks associated with the decline in oestrogen - health checks in the workplace support positive lifestyle changes.



**Learn more about Menopause:**

[The British Menopause Society \(BMS\)](#)

[BMS Workplace Guidance](#)

[My Menopause Centre](#)

[Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists \(RCOG\)](#)

# We know women's health



Through SiSU Health Station data from health checks by over 1 million women, we see how health risks change with age:

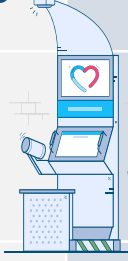
- Younger females are most stressed and likely to smoke.
- As women approach menopause, Body Mass Index (BMI) and body fat start to increase.
- Towards retirement age, blood pressure starts to increase, increasing the risk of stroke and heart attack.

We can support your health and wellbeing strategy for women (and ALL employees) through digital, self-service health checks, and continued support through our app & digital programs. IWD is a perfect time to have this top of your agenda.



Book a meeting to discuss SiSU Health for your workplace

# Packages for employers

|  |  | Healthy Workforce Snapshot<br>An accurate health audit creating high engagement and actionable insights | Healthy Workforce<br>A solution for your total workforce, regardless of location or role | Healthy Workforce Premium<br>Focus on the most challenging health risks for your business |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Inform<br>Engage<br>Activate<br>Empower<br>Analyse | Online health assessment & lifetime recommendations for all employees  | ✓   | ✓  | ✓   |
|  | PLUS unlimited self-service checks on a medical-grade Health Station  | Standard health checks<br>2-week installation   | Standard health checks<br>3 rotations per year   | Premium health checks<br>3 rotations per year   |
|  | Health signposting for employees with risks  | Results emails  | Results emails & signposting to your other services                                      | Triage & signpost to your other services / health professional                            |
|  | Employee access to coaching programs, simulators and challenges (app & web)  | 3 months  | 6 months   | 12 months   |
|  | Report & recommendations at the end of every Health Station rotation   | Snapshot  | Standard   | Bespoke   |

Standard 5-minute health check on the SiSU Health Station:



Height



Weight



Body Mass  
Index



Blood  
Pressure



Heart Rate



Body Fat %

You'll be supported by a **Dedicated Client Success Manager** and receive **marketing support** to achieve the best from your installations.



# Did you know...

In addition to the Health Secretary's announcement, The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are considering plans to widen access to health support in the workplace.

Employers will be encouraged to provide mental and physical health support at work. These employers are already ahead:



"We've taken our wellbeing strategy to the next level across some of our supply chain sites. Our ambition is to keep our colleagues safe, happy and well. Through the installations we have been able to do this and it has led to a call to action to over 300 colleagues to visit their GP"

"Physical wellbeing is so important to health which is why we frequently set up SiSU Health Stations in all regional distribution centres across the UK"



"With health everything is going ok until it's not. By regularly getting health checks you keep on top of your health and can make changes to help avoid the unexpected. That's why it's fantastic for Mondelez to offer these machines in the workplace where you can get a free check, within 5 minutes! No doctors appointments, travelling or costs 🙌 Thanks SiSU Health UK for bringing health checks conveniently to our colleagues"



# MailOnline

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## Employers could legally have to offer free health checks to staff under new Government drive to Britain's end sick-note culture

Bloomberg

### UK's Health Crisis Heading for 1 Million Delayed Appointments

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Retail & Consumer

## Exclusive: With UK health service in crisis, Tesco gives staff virtual doctors appointments

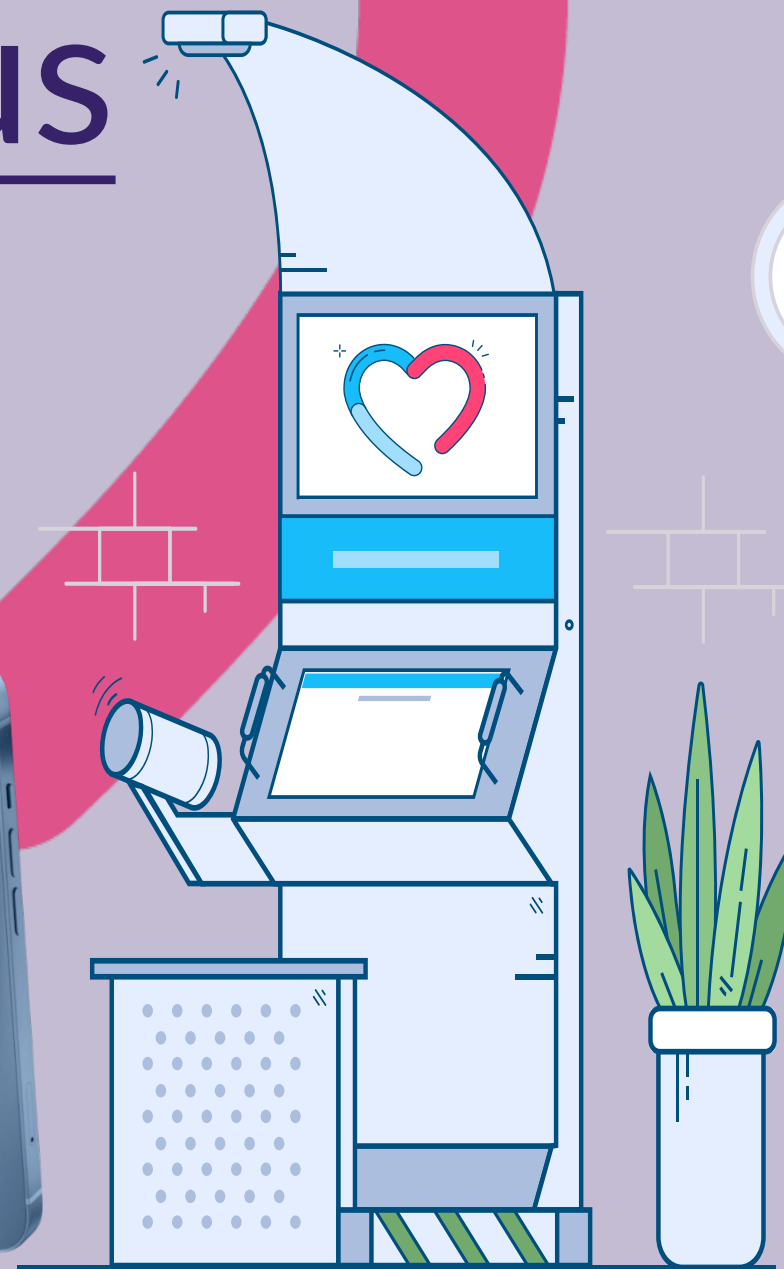
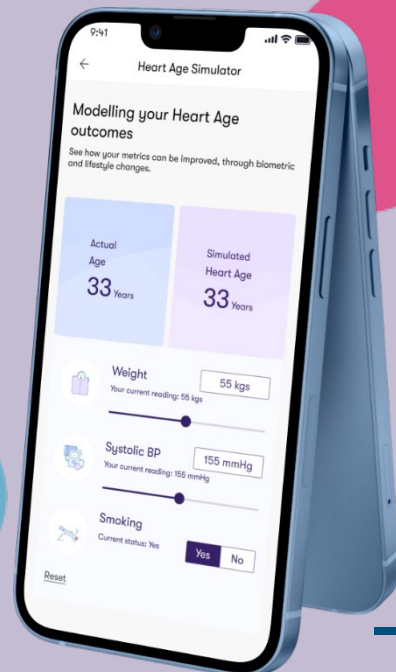
By James Davey

July 6, 2023 12:15 PM GMT+1 · Updated a month ago



A general view of Tesco Extra store, in Warrington, Britain, January 13, 2022. REUTERS/Jason Cairnduff/File Photo

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[www.sisuhealth.co.uk](http://www.sisuhealth.co.uk)