

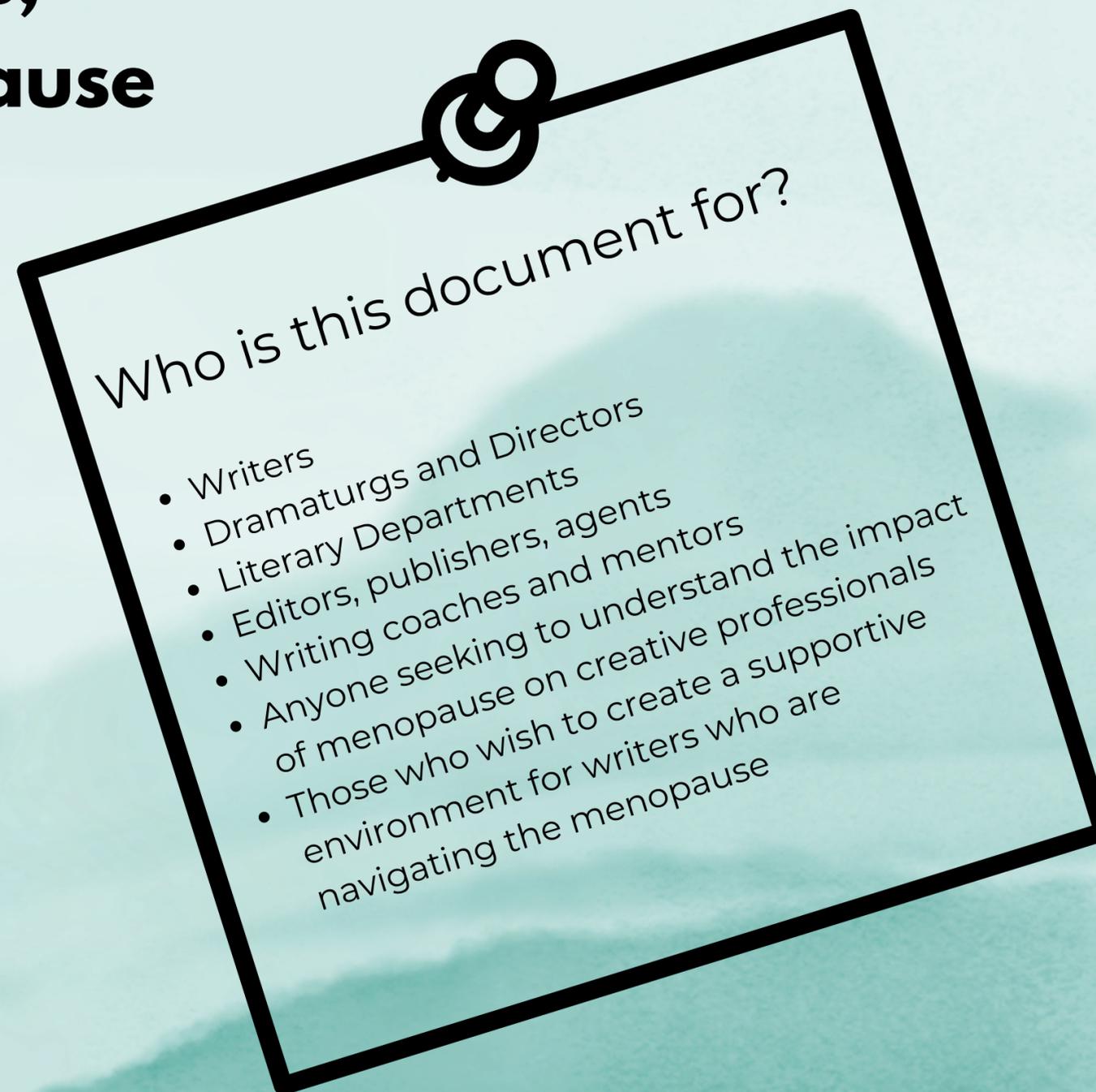
Writing the (r)age

**A guidance document for writers,
and those working with writers,
who are experiencing the menopause**

This guide is for writers, and those working with them, who are experiencing menopause and perimenopause. It explains the specific challenges writers may face.

This guidance includes information on the symptoms of menopause and how they specifically impact writers, whilst also offering guidance on how to create supportive work environments. It is written by writers who have experience of menopausal symptoms and the impacts that has had on their work.

This document aims to help writers, and their colleagues, understand how menopause affects them, how they can maintain productivity and well-being whilst sustaining their careers.



It is VERY IMPORTANT to note that none of the advice or suggestions in this document constitutes medical advice. Seeking advice from a GP or specialist is essential. There are links to medical advice at the end of this document.

What is menopause and perimenopause

Perimenopause is when you have symptoms of menopause due to failing hormones, but your periods have not stopped. Perimenopause ends, and you reach menopause, when you have not had a period for 12 months.

Physical symptoms include hot flushes, sweats, fatigue, joint pain, urinary symptoms, altered cycles, and vaginal dryness.

Cognitive symptoms can include anxiety, low mood, memory lapses, and poor concentration, often known as 'brain fog'.

Menopause, signalled by falling hormones, ends menstruation. Perimenopause brings fluctuating hormones, causing hot flushes, mood swings, and "brain fog". Cognitive shifts include memory lapses and concentration problems.

Physical changes involve altered cycles and joint pain. Emotional fluctuations, like anxiety, are common. Neurological effects impact mood, cognition, and sleep. This intricate mix of hormonal, physical, and neurological changes makes menopause a personal, transformative experience.

Why do we need this guidance document?

This document highlights menopause as a crucial workplace issue for writers and makes a case for greater support.

For writers, this document offers insight into how menopause can impact writing, practical advice and links to further resources. For our colleagues, it suggests ways of creating supportive environments and flexible working practices.

This resource encourages open dialogue, combats stigma, and empowers writers to confidently navigate menopause. It prioritises well-being and productivity, ensuring menopause doesn't impede creative expression or career opportunities.

Why are writers in need of additional support when experiencing menopause?

- Cognitive demands: Writing requires sustained concentration, memory, word recall and creative thinking, all of which can be affected by menopausal symptoms.
- Flexible but isolated work: Many writers work independently, making it harder to access support.
- Time-Sensitive deadlines: The pressure of deadlines can exacerbate stress and worsen menopausal symptoms.
- Creative blocks: Brain fog and mood swings can hinder creative flow and lead to writer's block.
- Self-Criticism and anxiety: Hormonal fluctuations can heighten mental health issues, which can be particularly detrimental to creative confidence.
- Fluctuating productivity: Menopausal symptoms can lead to unpredictable fluctuations in productivity, making it difficult to maintain a consistent writing schedule.

Guidance for Writers

- Holistic self-care: Establish sleep routines, adopt balanced diets, engage in exercise, and try to reduce stress.
- Flexible writing schedules: Identify peak concentration times, break down tasks, allow schedule flexibility, and create a quiet space for focus.
- Cognitive aids and technology: Experiment with mind mapping, voice recording, note-taking apps, and digital calendars.
- Support networks: Connect with support groups, share experiences, seek professional help, and talk to loved ones.
- Communicate your needs: Be open with colleagues, request accommodations, and use resources to advocate for your rights.
- Symptom and trigger tracking: Journal symptoms, use tracking apps, share findings with healthcare professionals, and make a note of what works for you.
- Seek medical and therapeutic help: There is no need to suffer through the menopause, help is available and you have a right to find the care that works for you.
- New perspectives and creative inspiration: The hormonal shifts and life reflections that can accompany menopause may offer writers fresh perspectives, emotional depth, and unique insights that can enrich storytelling and creative expression.

Guidance for working with writers

- Open, empathetic communication: Create safe spaces for discussion, actively listen, use inclusive language, and respect boundaries.
- Flexible deadlines and workloads: Offer extensions, adjust deadlines, break down tasks, and adapt schedules to accommodate fluctuating symptoms.
- Resource and information provision: Share reputable menopause resources, workplace policies and training opportunities.
- Accommodate cognitive challenges: Provide written summaries of meetings and notes, allow extra time for tasks, offer proofreading assistance, and be sensitive to 'brain fog'.
- Promote self-care and well-being: Encourage rest, nutrition, exercise, breaks, and a stress-free work environment.
- Avoid assumptions and stereotypes: Refrain from making assumptions, treat individuals with respect, and challenge workplace biases related to menopause.

Related health challenges

A high proportion of creative professionals (including writers) also have neurodivergent traits (dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, etc.). Underlying health conditions can also be exacerbated during menopause:

- Sensory overload: Menopause can intensify sensory sensitivities increasing risk of overload.
- Executive function disruption: Menopause combined with neurodiversity can lead to fatigue, which can impact planning, organisation, and time management.
- Heightened pain and fatigue: Menopause can exacerbate chronic pain and fatigue, impacting ability to work.
- Increased emotional dysregulation: Menopause can amplify emotional dysregulation.
- Cognitive overwhelm: Menopausal "brain fog" can compound cognitive differences.

Related considerations for trans men and gender non-conforming people

Menopause presents distinct challenges for trans men, gender non-conforming individuals, and other gender-diverse writers and creatives. The inherent isolation associated with writing can be intensified by difficulties in accessing inclusive and supportive communities. Additionally, limited medical access and awareness often result in inadequate healthcare, significantly affecting symptom management and overall creative productivity.

Navigating hormonal changes during menopause can be especially complex when intersecting with varied gender identities. Increased education and awareness within creative communities are essential to addressing these gaps. Establishing tailored support systems, including improved access to accurate, gender-affirming information and resources, can empower writers and creatives during menopause. Such inclusive support ensures that transgender, gender non-conforming and gender-diverse artists continue to thrive creatively, enriching the arts with their valuable and unique perspectives.

[Healthline has more information here.](#)

[And Bristol University has published an article with useful information and insight here.](#)

Further Resources

Menopause - NHS - This is a comprehensive resource covering symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and lifestyle advice. A further resource is available here: Patient Info on Menopause

The British Menopause Society - This is the specialist authority for menopause and post reproductive health in the UK.

NICE Guidance - This is thorough and aimed at medical professionals but details the care you should be able to receive from your doctor.

British Association of Performing Arts Medicine - Can provide free consultation to those concerned with menopause symptoms - they specialise in the way health concerns affect work in the performing arts work and provide free clinical advice and onward signposting. Their training sessions may be of interest.

Dr. Louise Newson:

- Newson Health: <https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk/> This is the official website for Dr. Newson's clinic and resources.
- The Balance App: <https://balance-menopause.com/> This app, created by Dr. Newson, provides information and support for menopause.

Industry Minds - Offers mental health support and therapy specifically tailored for individuals working in creative industries.

Artist Wellbeing - Provides resources and support for the mental health and well-being of artists.

The Menopause Charity - A charity dedicated to providing accurate and unbiased information about menopause.

Gov.uk - Workplace adjustments: <https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers> This provides information on reasonable adjustments, which are the basis of a needs assessment.

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