



**Women's thoughts before
the Action Menopause Warwickshire
men's menopause focus group**

Introduction and background

In response to feedback from Warwickshire residents, Healthwatch Warwickshire ran a countywide survey at the end of 2023 to capture people's experience of care and support around the menopause. [Read the report here](#)

Findings were shared with the Warwickshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee leading to recommendations for improvements in menopause services to be submitted to the Integrated Care Board.

Healthwatch Warwickshire have partnered with Action Menopause Warwickshire to run a men's focus group and find out what support and information men need. As a first step, over July 2024 we asked women what support they would like from the men in their lives, their husbands, partners, friends, brothers, adult sons, employers or work colleagues, around perimenopause and menopause.

This survey for women received 95 responses. These responses have been used to inform the men's focus group to find out what men would like to know to best support the women in their lives and what support men need for themselves.

[Read the men's focus group report here](#)

"My husband has done his own research. It has been hard for him to gather information about menopause from a male perspective rather than a female one. As in what to expect and how to deal with situations."



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How did women describe themselves?

We heard from 95 women, 47 described themselves as perimenopausal and 35 as menopausal. Some women were unsure as to what stage of menopause they were experiencing.

What do women want men to understand about perimenopause and menopause?

All respondents wanted men to understand:

- What menopause and perimenopause are
- What the emotional symptoms are
- What the physical symptoms are
- What happens to a woman's body during menopause and perimenopause

“Not only are we experiencing symptoms both emotionally and physically which impact us daily, but a lot of women also struggle with acceptance of the changes our bodies are going through, getting older, feeling powerless to the changes and maybe even not liking ourselves very much due to the changes. For me particularly, the frequent change in mood, that I seem to have no power over, leads me to feeling guilty on top of everything else I'm experiencing.”

“Don't assume that all women will get all symptoms to the same degree.”

“Please understand that we are also trying to understand it! It's the first time for us!”



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What do women want men to understand about perimenopause and menopause? (cont.)

Other suggestions that were made:

- Perimenopause and menopause can last for many years and are a constant period of adjustment.
- All women are different in how severely and for how long symptoms will affect them.
- Women may feel differently about themselves, which may have an impact on how they feel about others, including intimate relationships.
- Support, understanding and empathy from those closest to them can make a huge difference to how women cope with their varied symptoms.
- Women may feel guilty about the physical and emotional changes, much of which they have little control over.
- Support and proactively assisting with research into symptoms, interactions with healthcare professionals, treatments and medications can be hugely beneficially.



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Please understand...

“... It is a really obvious reminder that you are getting old and less able to do things. The fact that you can no longer have children, whether or not you want to. I think this is true however easy or hard the menopause is.”

“...we need to develop the friendship and companionship more with a partner, rather than focusing on sexual intimacy as a main driver in the relationship.”

“...that young women have menopause from either surgical reasons or other reasons and not just older people.”

“...how unpredictable and changeable that it is and that I often don't know what each day will look like so it's hard to share this with my husband. It is a time when I feel I have had a personality transplant, and it is scary. I also want him to know that our marriage may look different, but it is no less important to me.”

“...the symptoms are variable over time - hormonal changes follow a very jagged course over time, not a smooth and constant decline.”

“...that it is real and not just complaining! Some of us became so altered that we lose the person we were, which is absolutely devastating.”

“Patience and understanding are the key requirements.”

How would women like men to support them?

We asked women how they would like to be supported by the men in their lives and suggested avenues for support which respondents could answer yes or no to.

- 99% of respondents told us they wanted men to be willing to listen and be supportive
- 98% of respondents told us they wanted men to allow them to express their feelings even if they don't understand them
- 77% of respondents told us they wanted men to help them understand their symptoms
- 99% of respondents told us they wanted men to understand that some (but not all) mood changes may be due to menopause

“Not feeling embarrassed if the woman wants to discuss anything.”

“My partner looked up menopause (without my knowledge) and it told him what being healthy looked like and how I'd need some support. He also looked up symptoms and told me that my burning mouth was menopause which I'd been worried about. It was so helpful him doing some of the heavy lifting. I appreciate it so much and don't feel so alone.”

“Understand that they can play a vital role in helping you through the stages and emotional regulation. Understand that it is not a phase and not everyone goes through the same symptoms. Know they are powerful and key to supporting their partners.”



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“Be patient, ask if there's anything they can do rather than waiting to be asked, be proactive in helping.”

How would women like men to support them? (cont.)

- 99% of respondents told us they wanted men to keep an open mind about why they may be acting differently
- 92% of respondents told us they wanted men to encourage them to talk about what women need and when they need it
- 97% of respondents told us they wanted men to be patient when it comes to sex and find other ways to be intimate
- 42% of respondents told us they wanted men to go with them to medical appointments
- 78% of respondents told us they wanted men to support them to make healthy choices like eating healthily and reducing alcohol consumption (which can affect menopause symptoms)

“Don't take it personally if a woman does not want sex as it is sometimes the last thing on their mind. Fluctuating hormones and the very long list of symptoms that can be experienced makes just getting through the day a struggle at times.”

“A little more on the healthy diet side of things. If he prepares the food, we eat differently. Diet is now quite important to me.”

“Encourage and support fitness - especially if this was typical in the past and has been dropped. Be open to shorter bike rides, suggest walks etc.”

“Take on some of the mental load - all of the day-to-day planning and organising so often falls to women, but when our brains are letting us down everyone suffers if no one helps to pick up the slack.”

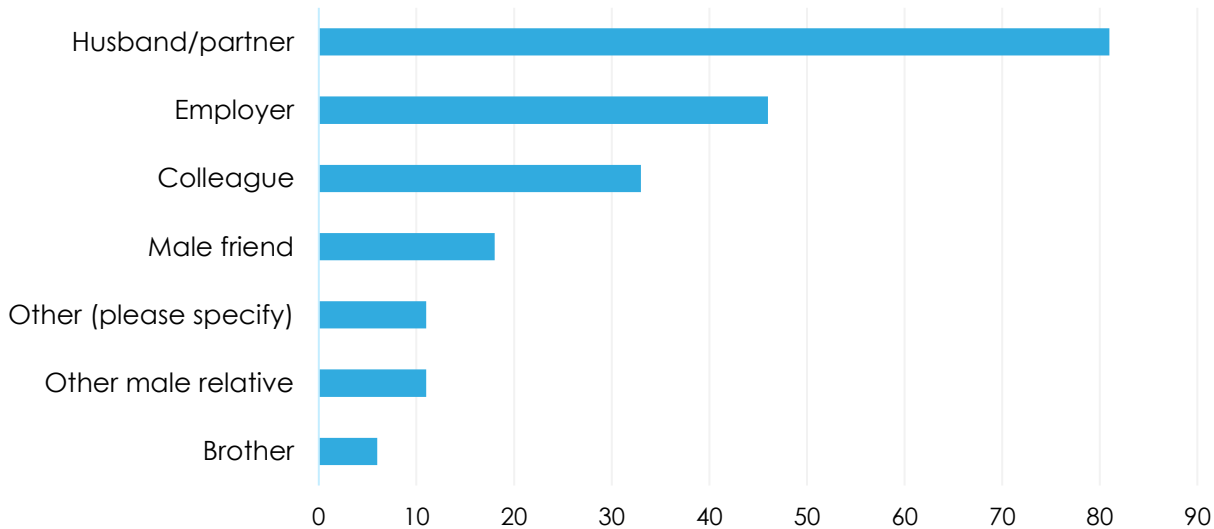


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Which men would women most value support from?

Which men in your life would you most value support from? (select all that apply)



“A lot of younger men (and women) simply don't understand what impact it can have on women in the workplace.”

Other suggestions included:

Health care staff, business owners, event organisers, team managers, sons, nephews and younger women.

“My team manager has expectations for everyone to be in at 9am, this cannot happen every time for me. I suffer fatigue the most. I drive a long distance to to get to work.”



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What level of understanding do women think those men have about the menopause and perimenopause?

Answer Choices	No understanding	Limited understanding	Sufficient understanding	Excellent understanding	Don't know	Response Total
Husband/ Partner	12.94% 11	43.53% 37	30.59% 26	11.76% 10	1.18% 1	85
Brother	17.95% 7	20.51% 8	10.26% 4	0.00% 0	51.28% 20	39
Other male relative	18.75% 9	33.33% 16	6.25% 3	0.00% 0	41.67% 20	48
Employer	9.86% 7	39.44% 28	22.54% 16	2.82% 2	25.35% 18	71
Colleague	6.25% 4	48.44% 31	15.62% 10	1.56% 1	28.12% 18	64
Male friend	12.50% 6	39.58% 19	0.00% 0	8.33% 4	39.58% 19	48
Other	12.12% 4	9.09% 3	0.00% 0	3.03% 1	75.76% 25	33

“Be proactively willing to engage and self-educate/support, not taking in passively the information I have researched.”

“My partner is an engineer and for him things are black or white and you can 'fix' most things. So, this is really hard for him to understand, although he is trying to be open.”



Most common response for each 'person'.

Whilst most women could comment on their husband/partner, employer or colleague's level of understanding, many women were not sure about the level of understanding from other men in their lives.



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How supportive do women think those men are?

Answer Choices	Not supportive	Offer limited support	Sufficiently supportive	Extremely supportive	Don't know	Response Total
Husband/ Partner	10.47% 9	31.40% 27	26.74% 23	30.23% 26	1.16% 1	86
Brother	26.47% 9	11.76% 4	2.94% 1	0.00% 0	58.82% 20	34
Other male relative	23.81% 10	23.81% 10	2.38% 1	2.38% 1	47.62% 20	42
Employer	11.94% 8	37.31% 25	22.39% 15	1.49% 1	26.87% 18	67
Colleague	16.13% 10	32.26% 20	11.29% 7	6.45% 4	33.87% 21	62
Male friend	14.63% 6	21.95% 9	4.88% 2	4.88% 2	53.66% 22	41
Other	19.35% 6	3.23% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	77.42% 24	31



Most common response for each 'person'.

Whilst most women could comment on their husband/partner or employer's level of support, many women were not sure about the level of support from other men in their lives.

"...I am hesitant to discuss my situation with a male employer, although I feel my employer will be supportive it is a barrier from my point of view. It is also difficult for employers to approach the subject in case of sensitivity or offending someone."

"I'd be happy if I was asked about how I was feeling or what I'm struggling with without feeling like I'll be judged for my response."



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Suggestions for further support...

"...encouraging their male friends and colleagues to take time to understand more."

"... compliments when one has taken the time and trouble to look good, especially when menopausal symptoms are negatively affecting mood and physical wellness."

"...reassurance without trying to solve it. Understand that some days are harder than others, but nothing has changed or happened, it's just hormonal. Sometimes we cry for no reason or are upset, angry and we don't know WHY! That it takes a lot of effort to keep a baseline of everything is OK, for them, for the kids, for work."

"Patience is really important when things are so changeable".

"...taking an interest in articles, being proactive about conversations etc."

"...knowing what to do when symptoms are out of control, and what intervention helps for each symptom. E.g. if they could see you sweating and flushed, just open the window without fuss. If they had more tools / knowledge of what works when, it would be better."

"...not being derogatory and making jokes about the way I feel or act."

"...encouraging joint ways of keeping fit, going for a walk, joining the gym."

"...providing menopausal training across the board for all colleagues."

What influence do those men have on decisions about treatment or care?

Answer Choices	No influence at all	A small amount of influence	A great deal of influence	Response Total
Husband/ Partner	39.53% 34	38.37% 33	22.09% 19	86
Brother	91.43% 32	8.57% 3	0.00% 0	35
Other male relative	85.71% 36	14.29% 6	0.00% 0	42
Employer	78.12% 50	14.06% 9	7.81% 5	64
Colleague	84.75% 50	11.86% 7	3.39% 2	59
Male friend	88.37% 38	11.63% 5	0.00% 0	43
Other	90.32% 28	9.68% 3	0.00% 0	31

“It is important men don’t feel they are being deliberately ignored as it must feel like that sometimes. Talking it out is so important. Women need to understand the impact it has on men too it can’t be easy! “



Most common response for each 'person'.

Whilst most responses suggested that men have no influence on a women’s decisions about care or treatment during the menopause, 52 women told us that their husband or partner had either a small or great deal of influence and 14 women told us their employer had either a small or great deal of influence.



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What else did women share with us?

Other themes that were mentioned:

- Women feeling uninformed themselves, so finding it difficult to clearly explain to others what they are going through.
- How the range of symptoms can make it hard to cope with daily life, pressures from family and expectations from employment, in the same way they would have previously.
- Feeling let down by, or a lack of support from, healthcare professionals, including having reliable access to treatment and medication.
- Support for the collaborative work between Healthwatch Warwickshire and Action Menopause Warwickshire.
- Thoughts and suggestions on how things could improve for all genders, across healthcare, education, and employment.

“Physical and emotional symptoms mean that we may feel out of control or less likely to want to do some things, but we're all different and some may not have any symptoms at all.”

“This needs explaining to teenagers at the time they are having sexual health education, they need to be aware of the span of reproductive life, both the beginning and the end-awareness is key.”



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Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and thoughts with us

Action Menopause Warwickshire are a local charitable group founded by Advanced Nurse Practitioner Sue Thomas to support local women to access the services and products they require to live their lives well through the menopause.

Find out about regular meetings here: [**Action Menopause Warwickshire**](#)

For more information

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