

Supporting Women in Sport During Perimenopause & Menopause

Welfare, Inclusion and Retention in Physical Activity

Key learning themes and reflections from the Menopause in Sport & Coaching webinar, delivered by Joy Bolton from Beanstalk Skills Academy CIC



“ This learning resource explores how perimenopause, menopause and post-menopause can affect women’s participation, confidence and enjoyment in sport and physical activity.

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About this learning resource

It is designed for coaches, volunteers, welfare leads and organisations working in sport who want to take a welfare-focused, inclusive approach to keeping women active across the lifespan and compliments Joy Bolton’s webinar – Menopause, Sport & Coaching.

The focus is not medical diagnosis or treatment, but on:

- Awareness and understanding
- Empathy and flexibility
- Removing practical barriers
- Creating environments where women feel respected, supported and welcome to continue being active

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Menopause and Participation in Physical Activity

Menopause is a normal life stage, but it can be a long and individual process. Symptoms may begin years before menopause (perimenopause) and can continue afterwards.

Common experiences discussed include:

- Fatigue and disrupted sleep
- Anxiety, low mood or brain fog
- Hot flushes and sensitivity to temperature
- Changes in confidence or motivation
- Sporadic or unpredictable periods during menopause



Stop & Reflect

- ▶ How confident do I feel recognising menopause-related barriers to participation?
- ▶ Could these experiences be affecting engagement or confidence in my setting?
- ▶ How might menopause be contributing to reduced attendance or drop-out?

Challenging “Just Push Through It” Attitudes

Women going through menopause are often expected to carry on as normal, even when experiencing significant physical or emotional changes.

While physical activity can be beneficial, pressure to “push through” can:



- Increase discomfort or embarrassment
- Discourage women from asking for flexibility
- Lead to quiet disengagement from sport or activity

Stop & Reflect

- ▶ What could you do in your setting to discourage messages such as this?
- ▶ Do you create a safe space for women to openly talk about their issues?

“ A welfare-led approach values choices, understanding and adaptability. ”

Recognising When Someone May Be Struggling

Women may not openly talk about menopause or identify it as the reason for changes.

Signs might include:

- Withdrawal or reduced confidence
- Irritability or changes in communication
- Lower tolerance for stress or pressure
- Needing more breaks, fresh air or time out



Practice Scenario

A regular participant becomes less consistent in attending sessions and appears withdrawn. During an activity, she asks to step outside for some fresh air and sits out part of the session.

Pause & Consider:

- ▶ What assumptions might I make?
- ▶ How could I respond in a way that prioritises welfare and dignity?
- ▶ What would help her feel comfortable returning next time?

“ These changes are not a lack of commitment. They often signal a need for supportive, flexible practice. ”

Supportive Leadership and Welfare-Focused Practice

How coaches, leaders and colleagues respond in everyday situations can have a significant impact on whether women feel comfortable, respected and able to continue taking part. Women experiencing perimenopause or menopause do not need to be looked after or protected.

What often makes the biggest difference is:

- Feeling respected and understood
- Being offered flexibility without judgement
- Knowing that adjustments are acceptable and normal



“Supportive, adult-to-adult responses – such as “That’s absolutely fine, take the time you need” – help reduce pressure and reinforce belonging, without requiring disclosure or explanation.”

Stop & Reflect

- ▶ Does my response communicate respect and equality?
- ▶ Am I offering flexibility as a normal part of participation, not a special exception?
- ▶ Would someone feel comfortable staying involved here without having to justify themselves?

Keeping Women Active: Reducing Drop-Out

Many women reduce or stop physical activity during mid-life. Menopause-related symptoms, alongside wider life pressures, can play a significant role.

Long-term engagement improves when environments:

- Normalise life-stage change
- Focus on enjoyment rather than performance
- Reinforce that participation does not need to look the same every week



Stop & Reflect

- ▶ At which point do women tend to disengage in my setting?
- ▶ Have we considered menopause as a contributing factor?
- ▶ What would encourage someone to return after time away?

“ Creating safe, supportive spaces can be something as simple as making participants aware that their needs will be met. Simple actions can often have huge impact. ”

Keeping It Simple: What Women Often Need

Support does not need to be complex.

Often, women simply need:

- ▶ Permission to adjust intensity or pace
- ▶ Access to water, toilets or fresh air
- ▶ Time to regulate temperature and breathing
- ▶ Reassurance that flexibility is normal or acceptable



“ These are every day welfare considerations, not special arrangements. ”

Stop & Reflect

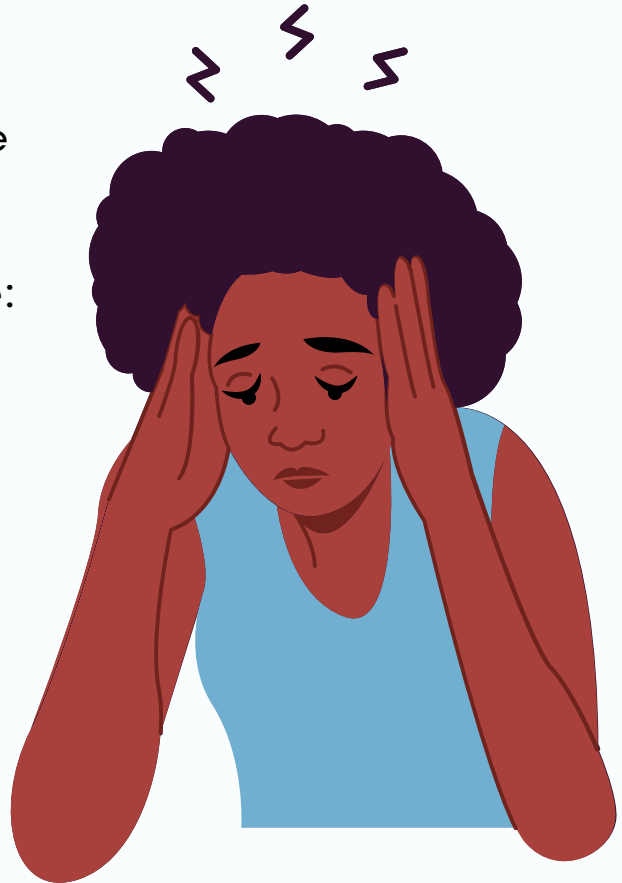
- ▶ How would you feel if one of these basic wants wasn't being met at an activity you were involved in?
- ▶ What impression would you have of that environment or activity if they didn't have suitable facilities, equipment or supportive individuals?
- ▶ Would you return to that environment if the lack of supportive resulted in you feeling vulnerable, embarrassed or concerned?

Facilities, Comfort and Reducing Anxiety

Managing temperature, comfort and hygiene can be especially important during perimenopause and menopause.

Supportive environments include:

- Easy access to toilets and showers
- Breaks for fresh air or cooling down
- Sanitary products available in toilets
- A culture where stepping away is normalised



Stop & Reflect

- ▶ Would I feel comfortable managing menopause symptoms here?
- ▶ Do facilities allow people to look after themselves discreetly?
- ▶ What practical change could make this space more inclusive?

“ Simple changes can reduce anxiety and help people stay engaged in sport. ”

Everyday Support & Visibility

Visible welfare support reassures women that their needs have been considered.

This might include:

- Clear messages about flexibility
- Consistent reassurance rather than explanation
- Knowing support is available without needing to disclose personal information



When support is visible, women are more like to continue attending.

Education, Choice & Respect

Menopause-aware practice supports inclusion when it:

- Avoids assumptions about age or experience
- Respects personal boundaries
- Emphasises autonomy and choice

“Offering support without pressure helps women remain in control of how and what they share.”

Period-Related Needs During Perimenopause

For some women, perimenopause includes unexpected or heavier periods, which can cause anxiety during activity.

Access to:

- Free period products
- Private toilet facilities



“ This supports dignity and helps remove barriers to participation. ”

Shared Responsibility and Sustainable Practice

Menopause-aware practice works best when it is:

- Embedded within organisational culture
- Applied to participants, volunteers and colleagues
- Normalised rather than treated as a one-off initiative



“ Small, consistent actions support long-term engagement. ”

One Simple Action

Before finishing this learning, pause and consider:

What is one small change I could make to help a woman experiencing perimenopause or menopause feel more comfortable, respected, or likely to stay active?

This might involve:

- Adjusting language or expectations
- Improving access to facilities
- Building flexibility into sessions
- Strengthening welfare awareness within your organisation



Key Takeaway

“ Menopause is a normal life stage, but its impact on sport and physical activity is personal and varied. Empathy, flexibility and practical welfare-focused adjustments help ensure women remain active, valued and included. ”

Signposting & Support

For more information about Beanstalk Skills Academy CIC, scan the QR code or click [here](#).



Women in Sport has lots of useful resources and support. Check them out [here](#).



The 'This Girl Can' campaign has a range of projects and support. Follow the [link](#) for more info.



Lancashire Women support women & girls across the county with a range of services. Take a look [here](#).





Gwen and Nathan are Sport Welfare Officers for Active Lancashire. For more information on how they can support your club, get in touch at

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