

# Menopause Policy

## AIM

This policy aims to:

Make sure that we support staff affected by the menopause and help them to feel comfortable at work, both when experiencing symptoms and when asking for support and adjustments.

Set out how we will make reasonable adjustments to minimise the risk of the working environment making menopausal symptoms worse for those experiencing them.

Minimise menopause-related stigma by educating staff on what it is and the symptoms that staff affected by it might suffer.

## Definitions

The **menopause** is a stage of life when a woman\* stops having periods. It typically affects those aged between 45 and 55, when oestrogen (female sex hormones) levels begin to fall. In the UK, the average age to reach the menopause is 51.

**Perimenopause** is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms. **Post-menopause** is the time beyond menopause.

**Early menopause** is when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen naturally, or as a side effect of some treatments.

For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause shall include perimenopause and early menopause.

\*We acknowledge that while the majority of people affected by the menopause will be women, those who are trans or non-binary may also experience the menopause or menopause-type symptoms. The support outlined in this policy is designed to meet the above aims for all affected colleagues.

## Symptoms

Individuals suffering from the menopause may experience symptoms that cause changes to their emotions and other aspects of their health, some of which may impact them at work.

Menopausal symptoms might include:

Hot flushes, night sweats and palpitations.

Difficulty sleeping, insomnia and fatigue.

Low mood, anxiety and depression.

Headaches and joint and muscle pain.

Weakened bladder function and urinary tract infections.

Vaginal dryness and reduced sex drive.

Problems with memory, confidence and concentration.

Irregular periods

Weight gain

Skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)

Clumsiness, falls and lack of coordination



For some individuals, being at work may make their symptoms worse. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause symptoms such as hot flushes, dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations.

Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for staff experiencing them to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood and anxiety may impact on decision-making and relationships with colleagues.

We acknowledge that the menopause will affect everybody differently – some individuals may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety. We will adapt our response to staff affected by the menopause on a case-by-case basis.

#### Legislation and guidance

Under the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**, employers have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999** require that employers make an assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees. This requires undertaking general risk assessments, which should include specific risks to the health of staff affected by the menopause.

The **Equality Act 2010** prohibits discrimination against an individual based on the protected characteristics, which include age, sex and disability. Employers are under a statutory duty to consider whether any 'reasonable adjustments' are required to alleviate any disadvantages staff encounter based on these characteristics.

**Section 6** of the Equality Act 2010 states that a person has a disability if:

They have a physical or mental impairment, **and**

The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Relating specifically to menopause symptoms:

Many of the aforementioned symptoms would be likely to be classified as a physical and/or mental impairment.

'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial.

'Long-term' means an impairment if it has lasted for at least 12 months, is likely to last for at least 12 months, or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

'Day to day activities' are those carried out by most people on a regular basis, and includes but is not limited to: walking, driving, carrying or moving things, being able to concentrate, writing, reading, typing, speaking

Ongoing symptoms linked to the menopause may meet the definition of a disability and where they do, employers will be required to consider whether any reasonable adjustments are required to alleviate any disadvantage.

Any such adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis and, where appropriate, staff affected by the menopause will be offered a variety of approaches to support them.

The Manager will ensure that anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms gets the same support and understanding as if they had any other health issue. The Manager will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support staff experiencing the menopause, and to make sure the workplace doesn't make their symptoms worse, by: Carrying out individual risk assessments to assess working conditions in line with the specific needs of staff affected by the menopause. Looking at issues such as:



- temperature and ventilation;
- the materials used in any uniform or corporate clothing;
  - access to toilet facilities and access to cold water;
- stress;
- ability to cool down quickly when necessary.

Ensuring that if a member of staff tells the Manager about a health condition, including menopausal symptoms, that conversation will be treated by the Manager as strictly confidential. If the staff member wants the information about their health condition to be shared that staff member must give explicit consent thereto. The staff member concerned must then agree with the Manager, who will be given this health information and by whom, exactly what health information is to be shared, and what the staff member wants not to be shared.

Monitoring the wellbeing of staff through structured conversations and review any plans made.

Providing resources and training opportunities to make sure that all senior staff are aware of the menopause, its potential impact on work, and what adjustments may be necessary.

Promoting information about and access to external support services.

Ensuring good ventilation and air quality throughout the nursery, leaving doors open where appropriate and ensuring windows can be safely opened.

Ensuring regular access to cold drinking water for all staff.

Regulating and monitoring the temperature of the nursery and collecting feedback from staff, as well as ensuring the temperature can be regulated per room by turning down radiators for example.

Ensuring toilet, washing and sanitary facilities are accessible for staff, and establishing a system that allows for cover for staff to access these facilities where necessary while they are teaching.

Providing small desk fans to help staff cool down if required.

Fitting blinds to windows.

Senior staff will work to create a culture in the nursery where staff can talk openly about the menopause by:

Providing information on the menopause in the staff room, e.g. posters and leaflets.

Creating a support group so that those who want to can seek support from each other.

Providing training for staff and managers to achieve consistent practice.

Referring to the menopause in the nurseries staff wellbeing policy.

Considering the use of an occupational health service or employee assistance programme (EAP)

### Role of line managers

Line managers who work with staff who may be affected by the menopause will:

Provide a non-judgemental, empathetic and confidential support system to staff.

Appreciate the personal nature of any conversations about the menopause and treat them confidentially and sensitively.

Monitor sickness absence, and have support meetings with staff if any patterns emerge.



Have regular, informal conversations with staff that they line manage who are affected by the menopause to discuss what support they need, and record any reasonable adjustments that are agreed.

Consider flexible working requests in order to accommodate acute symptoms.

Allow staff affected by the menopause to take regular breaks from their work if necessary to help manage symptoms.

Give swift permission for absence to attend medical appointments.

Promote information about and access to external support services.

Record menopause-related absences as an 'ongoing health issue' instead of as an individual short-term absence to avoid triggering sickness absence procedures.

Be sensitive to health issues such as the menopause during the performance management/appraisal process.

If necessary, seek advice from HR or occupational health colleagues, or discuss a referral with the staff member to occupational health for further support

#### 4.4 Role of staff members affected by the menopause

We encourage staff who are experiencing menopausal symptoms that are impacting their health and wellbeing at work to:

Share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with the manager.

Report honestly about their wellbeing and let the manager know if the menopause is having an impact on this.

Make time in their schedule to visit their GP and other support services.

#### Role of all staff

All staff are expected to:

Promote health and wellbeing for themselves and others at all times.

Treat each other with empathy and respect.

Support other members of staff, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance.

Accept and support any adjustments that staff affected by the menopause may be receiving as a result of their symptoms.

Report honestly about their wellbeing to their line manager or to the owner of the nursery.

#### Further resources

**Menopause** (NHS)

**Menopause Matters**

**Menopause: diagnosis and management** (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)

The **Daisy Network** charity

**Menopause in the Workplace**

Meg's Menopause – <https://megsmenopause.com/>

Talking Menopause – [www.talkingmenopause.co.uk](http://www.talkingmenopause.co.uk)

**Menopause resources** from the CIPD, particularly for:

**Line managers**

**HR staff**

Practical tips for supporting the menopause transition which may be considered:  
The menopause affects people in different ways, but there are some practical steps you can take to support women experiencing the menopause at work and help to minimise some of the most common symptoms. The support provided will vary according to the context of the role the person undertakes and the impact that symptoms are having. These are suggestions for adjustments that may help.

#### Sleep disruption and/or night sweats

- Recognise someone may take more short-term absence if they've had a difficult night.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.
- Offer a flexible working arrangement, for example a later start and finish time.
- Look at ways to cool the working environment, for example provide a fan or suggest the person works outside in the shade where it is cooler.
- Provide easy access to cold drinking water and washrooms.
- Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks.

#### Heavy or irregular periods

- Provide easy access to washroom and toilet facilities.
- Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the toilet.
- Make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed.

#### Headaches and fatigue

- Consider a temporary adjustment to someone's work duties.
- Provide a quiet area to work.
- Provide access to a rest room.
- Offer easy access to drinking water.
- Allow regular breaks and opportunities to take medication.

#### Muscular aches, and bone and joint pain

- Make any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.
- Allow someone to move around or stay mobile, if that helps. Psychological issues (for example loss of confidence, poor concentration, anxiety, and so on)
- Encourage employees to discuss concerns at one-to-one meetings with you.
- Discuss possible adjustments to tasks and duties that are proving a challenge.
- Address work-related stress by carrying out a stress risk assessment.
- Signpost to Health Assured for advice and/or counselling services.
- Ask the employee if they would like to identify a supportive colleague to talk to away from the nursery.
- Allow time out from others when needed, to have some quiet time or undertake relaxation or mindfulness activities.
- Discuss whether it would be helpful for the employee to visit their GP, if they haven't already.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) CBT can help people develop new techniques to tackle stress and manage anxiety. Physical symptoms such as hot flushes and trouble sleeping can also be helped by CBT. CBT support may be available through Health Assured. Employees can also discuss accessing CBT with their GP.



What can women do to help themselves?

The following may help to alleviate some symptoms:

- Eat a balanced healthy diet.
- Eat regularly.
- Do not smoke.
- Ensure alcohol intake is at or below recommended levels.
- Exercise regularly to maintain fitness and aerobic capacity.
- Ensure that weight-bearing exercise is carried out to maintain bone density.
- Wear natural fibres.
- Talk to your GP about managing the menopause and ensure that any symptoms are not due to other causes.
- Consider techniques such as mindfulness to help manage moods and outlook. Health Assured have some information about mindfulness. There are also free apps, such as Headspace, available to download from your usual app store.

