

Menopause Policy and Guidance



balance
the menopause support app

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 < company name > (“the Company”) is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone that works here.
- 1.2 Most individuals experience symptoms during perimenopause and menopause due to changes in hormone levels. With the right support and medical treatment for their symptoms, their experience at work will improve.
- 1.3 Menopause should not be taboo or ‘hidden’. We want everyone to understand what menopause and perimenopause are and to be able to talk about them openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women, it will affect trans men and some non-binary people, and all men will be affected by it indirectly.
- 1.4 The changing age of the UK’s workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal people are in work. Research shows that the majority of individuals affected are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for support or adjustments that they may need.
- 1.5 This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to individuals to help them manage perimenopause and menopause symptoms at work. It is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

2. Aims

- 2.1 The aims of this policy are to:
 - 2.1.1 Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about perimenopause and menopause.
 - 2.1.2 Ensure everyone understands what perimenopause and menopause are, can confidently have open and supportive conversations and are clear on the Company’s policy and practices supported by the HR department.
 - 2.1.3 Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of perimenopause and menopause, and how they can support individuals at work.
 - 2.1.4 Ensure that anyone suffering with symptoms feels confident to raise the issue and ask for support and any adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
 - 2.1.5 Reduce absenteeism due to perimenopause and menopausal symptoms.
 - 2.1.6 Assure people going through perimenopause and menopause that the Company is a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all < company name > staff at every level.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 The menopause is when someone stops having periods. It occurs when the ovaries stop producing eggs and as a result, levels of hormones called estrogen, progesterone and testosterone fall.

There are four key stages:

Pre-menopause: the time in life before any menopausal symptoms occur.

Perimenopause: when menopausal symptoms occur due to hormone changes, but periods still happen (even if irregular).

Menopause: when there has been no period for 12 consecutive months.

Postmenopause: the time in life after 12 months with no periods.

The average age for someone to reach menopause is 51, but hormonal changes in the perimenopause phase mean that many experience symptoms for around 10 years prior to this. One in 100 women enter the menopause under 45 years and one in 1000 women before 40 years.

5. Symptoms of Menopause

- 5.1 Over 80% of women, trans men and some non-binary people experience symptoms due to changes in hormone levels. 25% of these experience symptoms which could be classed as severe and have a significant impact on their daily life.
- 5.2 There are many symptoms including, but not exclusively, anxiety, brain fog, fatigue, hot flushes, trouble sleeping, poor concentration, headaches or migraine. Heavy periods, aching muscles and joints, and loss of confidence and self esteem can also occur.
- 5.3 It is important to remember that reduced levels of estrogen last for ever. This is not a phase that people go through and 'come out the other side'. Without replacing hormones, ongoing symptoms can occur for the rest of someone's life. Lack of estrogen has a further effect on future health as it is linked with loss of bone density (leading to osteoporosis), heart disease, diabetes and dementia.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1 Colleagues

6.1.1 All colleagues are responsible for:

- taking personal responsibility to look after their own health

- being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR
- if a colleague is unable to speak to their line manager, or their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to a member of the HR Department
- contributing to a respectful and productive working environment
- being willing to help and support their colleagues
- understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

6.2 Line managers

6.2.1 All line managers should:

- familiarise themselves with the menopause policy and guidance
- be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
- follow any menopause related guidance provided by the Company and HR, signposting and reviewing together with HR, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, or adjustments required
- record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented
- respect worker's right to privacy and confidentiality, ensure all information shared with colleagues, line managers and HR regarding experiences of staff members is treated as confidential (special category data)
- ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or symptoms are proving more problematic, the line manager will consult with the HR department who may:

- discuss a referral to Occupational Health
- if consent is obtained refer the employee to Occupational Health
- review Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations where reasonably practical
- update the action plan with the line manager and advise for this to continue to be reviewed.

6.3 HR will:

- offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this policy and guidance
- have open discussions with colleagues about menopause, and offer guidance, support, or adjustments in an attempt where possible to support the individual's requirements
- respect worker's right to privacy and confidentiality, ensuring all information shared with colleagues, line managers and HR regarding experiences of staff members is treated as confidential (special category data)
- update the policy and effectiveness of this policy when required
- attend appropriate training if required.

7. External Links

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines. These explain how your clinician can determine what types of treatment and interventions they can offer <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/Menopause>
- The NHS provides an overview of the menopause. You can read more at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- Free menopause information website with a vast library of peri/menopause information, films, podcasts, stories, visit. <https://www.balance-menopause.com/>
- **The Balance app** – for free perimenopause and menopause support and information. The app has a symptom tracker and personalised health reports which can be used to help individuals talk to their doctor about their symptoms. Find it in the App Store on your phone or download from here www.balance-menopause.com/balance-app/
- Watch this documentary with Davina McCall: <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/davina-mccall-sex-myths-and-the-menopause>