



Insight HR

MENOPAUSE SUPPORT POLICY

Menopause Support Policy

1. Purpose of Policy

This policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them. It aims to:

- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is; can confidently have good conversations and are clear on the school's policy and practices, supported by HR and Occupational Health.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support colleagues at work.
- Ensure that employees suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Assure employees that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

2. Who does it apply to?

While this Policy uses the term 'women' to talk about people who may experience menopause transition, it can impact trans or non-binary colleagues who do not identify as women in the same manner. All colleagues experiencing menopause transition should be supported.

3. Menopause as a health condition

Supporting colleagues experiencing symptoms of menopause transition means understanding that not everyone experiences menopause in the same way. Like any other health condition, colleagues will have different symptoms and need different support at different times.

The menopause is a natural event in most women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, each woman's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40. Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. Women may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

Definitions:

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

4. Confidentiality

Information reported by colleagues who report experiencing symptoms will be kept confidential (unless their express consent is provided, or, if, as an Employer, we have got serious concerns for that colleagues' safety or that of other colleagues). Personal data collected in accordance will be used and retained in accordance with the data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the organisation becomes aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

5. Symptoms

Symptoms vary greatly and can manifest both physically and psychologically, but they can commonly include:

- psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- hot flushes
- sleep disturbances (including night sweats) that can make you feel tired and irritable
- heavy bleeding that might cause pain or embarrassment at work
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- recurrent urinary tract infections, including cystitis
- headaches
- skin changes – dryness, itchiness

If they affect a colleague's comfort and performance at work, school will try to ensure that reasonable adjustments and additional support is available (if those experiencing menopausal symptoms would like these to be considered).

6. Making reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments can be made to help colleagues manage menopausal symptoms. These are likely to be temporary changes whilst going through menopause transition.

Risk assessments may be completed by line managers to understand more about how menopausal symptoms are affecting colleagues at work and the adjustments that are needed. Risk assessments should be reviewed periodically and whenever appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments will depend on colleagues' specific circumstances (symptoms, job role etc), but the types of changes that might help could be:

- access to cold water whilst at work;
- easy access to toilet facilities;
- making sure the temperature is as comfortable as possible e.g. providing a fan or access to fresh air;
- providing somewhere to store extra clothes or change clothes during the day;
- time off to attend consultant appointments.

7. Data protection

The organisation will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the organisation becomes aware of the issue is held

securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

8. Available support

Colleagues are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.

Sickness absences arising from menopausal symptoms will be dealt with via the Managing Attendance at Work policy and appropriate medical advice sought, if applicable.

Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs. Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager instead.

Employees will be encouraged to seek advice from medical practitioners regarding appropriate treatment and/ or to investigate suitable ways to manage/ reduce symptoms.

A referral to Occupational Health could also be of assistance, to understand what adjustments can be made; so, colleagues are encouraged to give their consent to be referred for advice.

External sources of help and support for employees and managers, is available:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency
- The National Health Service provides an overview of menopause.
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>.
- The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information in a dedicated area of their website at: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>.

9. Policy Review

This policy was adopted on 3rd October 2024 and will be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1

Risk Assessment – Menopause Support Policy

Please retain a copy of your assessment and ensure that the actions are completed. A copy will also be placed in your personnel file. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Employee Name		Position	
School			
Assessment undertaken by		Position	
Date of Assessment		Review Date	

Section 2: Your Health			
Please tick the box which best describes your current medical position/stage of menopause			
No symptoms (at present)	☐	Perimenopause	☐
Minor to moderate symptoms	☐	Significant symptoms	☐
Please detail the symptoms you are experienced including details regarding the severity, frequency and impact on you (whilst at work)			
Please give an indication of the medical intervention you have received to-date			
None	☐	GP diagnosis, no treatment	☐
Diagnosis, treatment plan in place	Insert details of treatment plan		
No formal diagnosis; alternative/ personal treatment	Insert details		

Section 3: Job and Workstation		
Do you have easy access to drinking water, rest facilities and toilets?	Yes	No
Insert details:		

Is the environment in which you work comfortable?	Yes	No
Insert details:		
Is the job self-paced and are you able to avoid long periods of standing/ sitting/ driving or fatigue?	Yes	No
Insert details:		
Are you concerned about your levels of concentration/ stress/ anxiety? (Complete a stress risk assessment)	Yes	No
Insert details:		

Section 4: Discussion Points/ Actions Agreed			
Having completed your assessment (Section 2/3), list the points for discussion with your manager.			
Discussion Points		Actions Agreed	
<i>e.g. medical intervention</i>		<i>Referral to OH, visit GP by (date)</i>	
Employee Signature		Manager Signature	

Assessment Review	
This assessment should be repeated in 3 months' time; the agreed date or immediately, with your line manager, if required.	
Date	Next Review date:

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below)
- Agree actions, and how to implement them (you should use the risk assessment template (See Appendix 1) to record the meeting, so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends).
- Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is stored securely.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.
- Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support for women should be considered as detailed below:

Hot Flushes:

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

Heavy/light Periods:

- Have permanent access to toilet and wash facilities;
- Provide storage space for a change of clothing if required.

Headaches:

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Loss of Confidence:

- Have regular Personal Development Discussions, if a colleague wants these;
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues, if a colleague wants these;
- Offer coaching to the individual which might help with confidence;
- Offer reassurance about a person's value and worth in the organisation;

Poor Concentration:

- Review task allocation and workload where appropriate;
- Provide diaries, books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment (as appropriate);
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;

Anxiety:

- Promote counselling services provided by Thinkwell or other organisation.
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of work their area;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk during lunch breaks.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety. If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.