



Managing Menopause at Work Policy

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Update Information

This model policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice (where appropriate).

1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

The recognised trade unions have been consulted.

2. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Raise awareness of the menopause and associated symptoms
- Set out the support measures for those experiencing the menopause symptoms at work
- Create an environment whereby affected employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms
- Form part of the school's commitment to Health & Safety within the workplace and to ensure employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

3. What is the Menopause?

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and others who have a menstrual cycle including:

- Trans persons – “trans” is an umbrella term used to describe persons whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
- Persons with “variations of sex development” (VSD) – some persons might prefer to identify as intersex or use the term “differences in sex development” (DSD)
- Persons who are non-binary.

The menopause usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age but it can also happen earlier or later in life. In the UK the average age of menopause is 51¹. For many, symptoms last about four years, but in some cases symptoms can last a lot

longer.

There are three different stages to the menopause:

- Peri-menopause – this is the lead up to the menopause when many women may experience symptoms
- Menopause – this is when a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to conceive
- Post-menopause – this is when a woman's periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months.

Additionally, some may experience the menopause before the age of 40, known as “premature menopause” or “premature ovarian insufficiency”.

Throughout the three menopausal stages, the individual can present with a number of different and often debilitating physical or psychological symptoms, including:

- Insomnia and night sweats
- Hot flushes and dizziness
- Palpitations and breathlessness
- Irregular periods and heavy bleeding
- Painful menstrual cramps
- Weight gain and slowed metabolism
- Thinning hair and menopausal hair loss
- Skin irritation, dryness, and itching
- Dry eyes and discomfort
- Vaginal dryness, itching, and discomfort
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint and muscular aches and stiffness
- Headaches and migraines
- Low energy levels and fatigue
- Low mood and irritability
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Reduced concentration and memory loss
- Increased emotional sensitivity and loss of confidence.

Stages and symptoms of the menopause can vary from person to person, and range from very mild to severe, as can the length of time over which these symptoms are experienced. These symptoms can begin months or even years before an individual's menstrual cycles stop, and persist for several years after their last period.

It should be remembered that this can also be a time of life when women are experiencing difficulties, not least with increasing caring responsibilities, and the onset of other age-related health conditions.

¹ Source: [NHS inform](#)

4. Managing Menopause in the Workplace

Employers should ensure they have steps, procedures and support in place to help staff affected by the menopause.

Having regular conversations with staff and listening to their concerns might help resolve issues early on with minimal impact on duties at work.

4.1 Complying with Legislation

When dealing with issues concerning the menopause, employers should be mindful of the related areas of law which may be engaged such as the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#), which says an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare at work. Whilst the menopause is not a specific 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act 2010, if an employee is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could amount to discrimination if it relates to one of the protected characteristics, for example:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment.

4.2 Supportive Measures

It is important for employers to be aware that the menopause and its symptoms can affect staff at any time. The menopause can also have an impact on those supporting someone going through the menopause, for example a relative, partner, colleague or carer. Supporting and creating a positive and open environment between an employer and someone affected by the menopause can help prevent the person from:

- Losing confidence in their skills and abilities
- Feeling like they need to take time off work and hide the reasons for it
- Having increased mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression
- Leaving their job.

Failing to recognise and provide the relevant support could result in:

- Poor employee engagement and low morale
- Reduced performance and lost productivity
- High rates of sickness-related or even unauthorised absenteeism
- Poor working relationships and conflict at work
- A damaged employer-employee relationship
- Loss of valuable members of staff who may leave.

Employers should explore the possible adjustments which can be made to assist staff who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause, and to ensure they can continue to do their job confidently and effectively. The adjustments can include for example:

- Adequate ventilation/positioning near a door or window
- Easy access to toilet facilities
- Access to private/designated areas to rest/recover and/or take medication
- Signposting to specialist organisations providing support
- Flexibility and increased frequency in breaks if required

- Making allowances for sickness absence under the [Managing Attendance Policy](#).

Where symptoms are severe, consider undertaking a risk assessment and/or referring the member of staff to Occupational Health to ascertain whether the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms and what reasonable adjustments would accommodate them in carrying out their duties.

Providing appropriate training to line managers to promote a culture of openness about the menopause as well as other workplace health issues. Those responsible for delivering the training and/or line managers should be properly attuned to menopausal symptoms and aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can provide support in a sensitive and constructive manner.

Organising conversations with staff - individual conversations with staff affected by the menopause should always be confidential and held in private where both the manager and staff member are comfortable and will not be disturbed.

4.3 Treatment Options

Individuals affected may not need any assistance with the menopause and they can go through this natural stage with no requirement for medical interventions. For those who may require interventions they may find a number of treatment options available which they can explore further with their GP. These include:

- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
- Alternative medications like anti-depressants
- Natural treatments
- Changing to a healthier lifestyle (diet and exercise).

The employer can also refer the individual to the Employee Assistance Programme if appropriate.

4.4 Sickness Absence

When a staff member is off sick because of the menopause, the employer should record these absences separately from other absences.

Schools should seek advice from The Schools HR Co-operative where such absences have contributed towards a Managing Attendance Meeting.

5. Further Sources of Information and Support

Please note: This section contains links to external third-party websites. The school is not responsible for these external websites or the content of them, and we do not accept responsibility or liability in respect of the content of these third-party websites.

- [TUC - Guidance on the menopause](#)
- [Acas - Guidance on Menopause at Work](#)
- [NHS - Menopause information](#)
- [British Menopause Society](#)
- [Menopause Matters](#)
- [The Daisy Network](#)
- [CIPD](#)

- World Menopause Day – 18 October.
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Policy has been reviewed and refreshed. Refer to the Schedule of Amendments for full detail. [Schedule of amendments](#)