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**Menopause in the workplace – guidance for staff and managers**

This policy outlines the support available to employees experiencing menopausal symptoms, as well as raising awareness and understanding of how this can impact them in the workplace.

1. **Purpose of this policy**

We are committed to maintaining an inclusive workplace by ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of all our employees. This policy is intended to raise awareness about menopause and increase the understanding of how this can have an impact on those experiencing symptoms in the workplace.

As menopause symptoms will vary for each employee, from hot flushes and heavy periods to anxiety and poor memory, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. As such, we want our employees to feel confident in approaching their line managers or our people team to discuss options to make their working day more comfortable.

Any discussions that take place with an employee will be treated sensitively and confidentially, and not be disclosed without the express permission of the employee unless there are exceptional circumstances. Additional advice and support are available from our people team or occupational health where required.

This policy outlines the support available to employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms and includes practical guidance for line managers about how to best to support employees.

1. **What is menopause?**

The NHS defines menopause as when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. This usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. The menopause is made up of three key stages (perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause).

The average age to reach menopause is 51, and while some sail through the experience with barely a hot flush, others are troubled by symptoms that impact their professional lives. Research suggests those with serious symptoms take an average of 32 weeks’ leave from work.

1. **Understanding the terminology**

**Early perimenopause** is the first sign of change. It marks differences in the usual monthly cycle when periods may become irregular and/or infrequent. The average age this starts is around 47, but sometimes begins as early as the mid-30s.

**Late perimenopause** sets in a couple of years later as symptoms become more obvious – menstrual cycles may be completely out of kilter, sometimes not resulting in a period for several weeks or months. Additionally, periods might last for fewer days or longer, and be very heavy.

**Menopause** refers to a single day: when you haven’t had a period for 12 months in a row. The average age to reach menopause is 51.

**Early menopause** is classed as those who reach the stage before they are 45 years old.

**Premature Ovarian Insufficiency** (POI) is the term sometimes applied to women under 40 years old who experience menopausal symptoms such as irregular or infrequent periods.

**Surgical menopause** is reached when a woman has a hysterectomy to remove her womb, bringing about immediate menopause.

**Post-menopause** refers to the time after the final period, usually defined as more than 12 months without a period in someone who has their ovaries or immediately following surgery if the ovaries are removed.

1. **Some common menopause symptoms and the support available**

**Hot flushes**

* Request temperature control for workstation, such as desk fans, or moving to a location that is positioned away from heat or near to air conditioning/a window.
* Regularly access cold drinking water.
* Take short breaks from the computer when required.
* A change of uniform, if applicable – uniforms newly available in breathable fabrics.
* Access to showers/washrooms

[Add/delete as appropriate]

**Headaches**

* Access to a quiet space to work, when appropriate and available, i.e. a meeting room.
* Have reasonable time out to take medication if necessary.
* Request adjustments to electronic devices, such as lowering of monitor screen brightness.

[Add/delete as appropriate]

**Difficulty sleeping**

* Formally request to make adjustments to your working pattern. Our flexible working policy can be found [insert location of flexible working policy].

[Add/delete as appropriate]

**Problems with memory and concentration**

* Work with your manager to create a plan to review your task allocation and workload.
* Identify if there are specific times of the day when concentration is better or worse and discuss adjusting your working pattern/practice accordingly.
* Reduce interruptions in the working day, i.e. have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having ‘protected time’, so that they are not disturbed.

[Add/delete as appropriate]

**Low mood or anxiety**

* Discuss your feelings with your line manager or HR at the earliest opportunity so they can identify any day-to-day support in the workplace that may be necessary.
* Utilise our free and confidential support services that can be accessed via [insert location of employee assistance programme].
* Explore the wide range of wellbeing resources available to employees, such as [insert wellbeing support available]. This can be accessed [point to where support can be found].

[Add/delete as appropriate]

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list, and it is important to remember that not everyone will experience all symptoms, or even need support or adjustments. Please use this as a guide and tailor your approach to your personal needs.

1. **Key responsibilities and who to contact**

**Line manager responsibilities:**

Every experience of menopause is different; therefore, it is not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines that can be applied universally. If an employee wishes to speak to you about their symptoms or generally about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), you should:

* Ensure no one experiences less favourable treatment as a result of their menopause symptoms.
* Allow adequate time to have the conversation.
* Ensure conversations are held in a private room/away from the office floor to preserve confidentiality.
* Suggest the ways they can be supported in the workplace - support needed may vary based on the individual needs and symptoms.
* Encourage the employee to seek medical advice.
* Put in place any agreed actions/adjustments that support ongoing conditions related to the menopause.
* Discuss if they would like other members of the team to be informed, and by whom.
* Make a commitment to having designated time to catch up for a follow-up meeting.
* Confirm in writing any agreements made.
* Seek additional advice from HR or occupational health where necessary.

[Add/delete as appropriate]

**Employee responsibilities:**

If you find that you are experiencing menopausal symptoms and it is affecting your wellbeing and capacity to work, please consider the following:

* Taking personal responsibility to look after your health by visiting your GP and find out more about menopause from available sources of information [insert where support can be found].
* Discuss practical needs with your line manager or HR as soon as you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable us to consider what, if any, support is required.
* Consider some of the ways you feel that we can support you, see recommendations above in section 4.

[Add/delete as appropriate]

1. **Additional support**

Should you need additional support, you can find further information and support here:

**NHS information**

[https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/)

[https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause/)

**NICE guidelines on ‘Menopause: diagnosis and management’**

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information>

**Menopause Matters**

[https://www.menopausematters.co.uk](https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/)

**Women’s Health Concern**

[https://www.womens-health-concern.org](https://www.womens-health-concern.org/)

**Daisy Network – Information on POI (Premature Ovarian Insufficiency)**

<https://www.daisynetwork.org>

**The Menopause Exchange**

<https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk>