

# MENOPAUSE POLICY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Within this policy 'we' and 'us' means the Federation.

## 2. AIMS

2.1 This policy aims to:

- Make sure that we can 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 across the Federation by educating staff on what it is and the symptoms that staff affected by it might suffer.
- Provide further resources to help staff, particularly line managers, to support others through difficulties the menopause may cause them.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 The menopause is a stage of life when a woman<sup>1</sup> 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.
- 3.2 Perimenopause is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms. Post-menopause is the time beyond menopause.
- 3.3 Early menopause is when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45.
- 3.4 Menopause can happen for a number of reasons, including naturally, due to genetics, surgery, health conditions, and cancer treatments.
- 3.5 For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause shall include perimenopause and early menopause.

### 4. SYMPTOMS

- 4.1 Individuals experiencing 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.
- 4.2 Symptoms can be physical and mental, can fluctuate and can vary in severity, variety and length. Symptoms can begin months or years before a woman's periods stop.
- 4.3 This is not an exhaustive list of menopausal symptoms, which might include:
  - Challenges with memory, confidence and concentration.
  - Low mood, anxiety, panic attacks, and depression.
  - Hot flushes, night sweats and palpitations.
  - Difficulty sleeping, insomnia and fatigue.
  - Headaches and joint and muscle pain.
  - Weakened bladder function and urinary tract infections.
  - Vaginal dryness and reduced sex drive.
  - Periods which are painful, irregular, sudden, heavy.
  - Sudden weight gain.
  - Worsening of existing health conditions and associated symptoms, e.g. arthritis, skin conditions, mental health problems.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- 4.6 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.

## 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The Federation will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support staff experiencing the menopause, by:
- Carrying out individual risk assessments to assess working conditions in line with the specific needs of staff affected by the menopause.
  - Providing resources and training opportunities to increase awareness of the menopause, its potential impact on work, and what adjustments may be necessary.
  - Promoting information about external support services.
  - Ensuring good ventilation and air quality throughout the Federation, leaving doors open where appropriate and ensuring windows can be safely opened.
  - Ensuring regular access to drinking water for all staff.
  - Regulating and monitoring the temperature of the Federation, as well as ensuring the temperature can be regulated, for example by turning down radiators.
  - Ensuring toilet, washing and sanitary facilities are accessible for staff
  - Provision of an employee assistance programme (EAP) for further support.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 We will work to create a culture where staff can talk openly about the menopause by:
- Providing information on the menopause.
  - Facilitating a support group so that those who want to can seek support from each other.
- 5.4 Role of senior leaders, line managers and the HR team:
- Provide a non-judgmental, 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.
  - Offer 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.

### 5.5 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:

- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let their line manager or another trusted member of senior staff.
- Share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with their line manager or another trusted member of senior staff.
- Make time in their schedule to visit their GP and other support services.
- Access our employee assistance programme (EAP) for further support.

### 5.6 Role of all staff

- 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 another trusted member of senior staff.

## 6. 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
- Menopause resources from the CIPD, particularly for:
  - Line managers
  - HR staff