

Model employer menopause at work policy

About this policy

EMPLOYER is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here. EMPLOYER recognises that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments. EMPLOYER recognises that the menopausal symptoms can also affect transgender people including non-binary people.

EMPLOYER is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

The aim of the policy is to

- make managers aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work
- foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner
- raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause
- enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs
- outline support and reasonable adjustments available
- help us recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

This policy is part of EMPLOYER's commitment to ensuring the health and safety and wellbeing of all the workforce, and will ensure the workplace does not make the menopausal symptoms of employees worse.

This policy is part of EMPLOYER's commitment to equality and diversity. We are committed to creating a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of EMPLOYER as an employer of choice. EMPLOYER recognises that many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments offered here may not only be of benefit to workers experiencing the menopause, but to all staff.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all staff who are employed at NAME OF EMPLOYER.

Definition of the menopause (See also the section headed 'Glossary')

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and peri-menopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms. Each woman will be affected in different ways and to

different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

EMPLOYER recognises that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Menopausal symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate.
- Heavy and painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic.
- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance.
- Low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems.
- Urinary problems - more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal.
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort.
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness.
- Weight gain.
- Headaches and migraines.
- Menopausal hair loss.
- Osteoporosis - the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis.
- Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope with.

Support for employees experiencing the menopause

EMPLOYER is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to support staff experiencing the menopause. All staff will be provided with appropriate information and training so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles.

All policies and procedures should take account of the effects of the menopausal symptoms to ensure that employees experiencing the menopause are not disadvantaged as a result of their symptoms. EMPLOYER recognises that some employees experiencing the menopause may find that related symptoms may impact on their health and wellbeing, and we aim to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals.

EMPLOYER recognises that the menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to let their line manager or the alternative contact (see below) know if they are struggling with symptoms that may impact on their work, so that appropriate support is provided. Such information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with EMPLOYER's data protection policy.

An alternative contact is available to employees experiencing the menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their line manager, (particularly if they are male). This is NAME OF ALTERNATIVE CONTACT

Employees may also prefer to discuss their problems with an alternative manager and/or a branch rep.

Managers should make allowances should there be an additional need for sickness absence by employees experiencing the menopause in order to manage their menopausal symptoms.

Absence will be recorded as related to menopausal symptoms and managers will consider such absence as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers.

Further details can be found in the 'Sickness absence policy and procedure' OR OTHER RELEVANT POLICY.

EMPLOYER recognises the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.

Further details can be found in the 'Performance management, capability and disciplinary procedures' [include a link or signpost to the appropriate policies].

EMPLOYER will ensure that gender sensitive risk assessments are undertaken to consider the specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause and to ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required.

Common areas in particular to consider are:

- workplace temperature and ventilation
- access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
- access to drinking water
- uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- working times and break times
- workplace stress and workload
- bullying and harassment.

Further details can be found in the 'Health and safety policy and procedure' [include a link or signpost to the appropriate policy].

Employees who are experiencing the menopause can apply for the following adjustments to support them at work:

- Control over environmental factors – with provision of desk fans on request, review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators, fitting blinds to windows, greater access to chilled drinking water, and to toilets and washing facilities.
- Where uniforms are provided, to use natural fibres wherever possible.
- Flexibility over uniform and dress codes should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating, and provision of additional spare uniforms.
- Changing/washing facilities for staff to change clothes during the working day.
- For employees who are required to drive as part of their usual work pattern, duration of travel to be reduced and increased rest breaks provided.
- Flexible working arrangements including options for flexitime (to work around symptoms or adjusting start and finish times for example), shift-swapping, and homeworking etc., more details to be found in the 'Flexible working policy and procedure' at [include a link or signpost to the appropriate policy].
- Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day, and if required providing cover as necessary for these breaks.
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments, more details to be found in the 'Time off for medical appointments policy' at [include a link or signpost to the appropriate policy].
- Temporary changes to the employee's duties, such as undertaking fewer high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings or on reception because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes, or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day.
- Provision of private spaces for women to rest temporarily, to talk with a colleague or to phone for personal or professional support. (For further advice on adjustments available contact HR). This is not a definitive list of adjustments.

EMPLOYER will consider additional suggestions put forward by members of staff and branch reps.

Confidential support is available for individual employees from the employee assistance programme and this may include counselling if appropriate, in addition to practical information and advice. [include a link or signpost to further information.]

Responsibilities of managers

Managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities. Training on the menopause will be provided to all managers and branch equalities reps. This will also include any specific issues for BAME women, disabled women and trans employees.

Managers (with the support of HR where requested) should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work-life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered. They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues. Managers should be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially and professionally.

Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the menopause, and put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing the menopause.

EMPLOYER will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality. All requests for support or adjustments must be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the data protection policy.

Managers will support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate.

Responsibilities of employees

All staff should take a personal responsibility to look after their health. Employees are encouraged to inform their manager (or the alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support, so that they can continue to be effective in their jobs.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP, the employee assistance programme and other external organisations (see sections below headed 'Self-management for staff experiencing the menopause' and 'Further Information').

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause. If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to the menopause, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

Review and monitoring

EMPLOYER will ensure that all new employees, supervisors and managers will receive induction on the policy. Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed jointly by branches and management, on a regular basis. The purpose of this monitoring and review is to identify where reasonable adjustments can be made to working conditions, practices and policies in order to make this policy effective.

Glossary

Menopause – a natural transition stage in most women's lives lasting from four to eight years, although for some women it can be much longer. Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55, although it can start earlier. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may also experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms as a result of the menopause.

Premature menopause – for some women, it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger. This is sometimes called premature ovarian insufficiency. The

NHS estimates that 1 in every 100 women will experience premature menopause. Medical or surgical menopause – there are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the woman’s age, such as a medically induced menopause to shrink fibroids or when the ovaries are damaged by specific interventions such as treatment for cancer, or when a woman’s ovaries are removed as part of a hysterectomy.

Perimenopause – a period of time before the menopause, in the years leading up to the menopause where there can be significant changes for women, including irregular and heavy menstrual bleeding and many of the classic symptoms associated with menopause.

Post-menopause – a term used when a woman’s periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon. Problematic symptoms may continue for years.

Self-management for staff experiencing the menopause

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence. Consider:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP
- Discussing symptoms with your manager or with the alternative contact (see above) and with your branch rep and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments

Further information

NHS information

www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause

NICE guidelines on ‘Menopause: diagnosis and treatment’

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information

Menopause Matters www.menopausematters.co.uk

Women’s Health Concern www.womens-health-concern.org

Daisy Network <https://www.daisynetwork.org>

The Menopause Exchange www.menopause-exchange.co.uk

Signature of BRANCH REP

DATE

Signature of EMPLOYER

DATE
