

Template Menopause at Work Policy

This is a template policy that you as employers can use as guidance or as a template to amend for your own business needs.

The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, though it isn't always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst not every woman suffers with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

This policy sets out guidelines for staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations about their symptoms
- Foster an environment where staff can ask for reasonable adjustments at work
- Take a proactive stance by promoting a greater understanding of the menopause
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support staff at work
- Reduce staff absence due to menopausal symptoms
- Reduce resignations due to menopausal symptoms.

Definitions

For full definitions of the terms used in this policy please see the 'Glossary of Terms' on the Menopause & Me area of the Suffolk Libraries website.

Perimenopause is the period that leads to the menopause when an individual may experience changes, such as irregular periods, or other menopausal symptoms.

Menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, it occurs when an individual stops menstruating and does not have a period for 12 consecutive months. This is the end of their natural reproductive life.

Around 1 in 100 people experience the menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency. To find out more about early menopause, go to the National Health Service at [Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) and/or the daisy network at www.daisynetwork.org

Surgical Menopause involves the removal of an individual's ovaries, either on its own or in conjunction with a hysterectomy. As the ovaries are the body's main source of oestrogen production, this could immediately trigger the menopause, regardless of age. A hysterectomy, without the removal of ovaries, may lead to earlier menopause than if a hysterectomy had not been carried out.

A trans man is someone who proposes to go through, is going through or has gone through a process, or part of a process, to change their gender from woman to man. Trans men may go through perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms.

Non-binary is an umbrella term for a person whose gender identity is neither male nor female. A non-binary individual with female genitalia will go through perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms.

Symptoms

Those with lived experience of the menopause may experience one of the 34 symptoms recognised as being part of (peri)menopause. The number of symptoms can vary from person to person and range from very mild to severe.

The symptoms of perimenopause and menopause can be the same.

Most Common symptoms

- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Irregular periods
- Loss of libido (sexual desire)
- Vaginal dryness
- Mood swings

Pains

- Breast pain
- Headaches
- Joint pain
- Burning tongue
- Electric shocks
- Digestive problems
- Gum problems
- Muscle tension

- Itchy skin
- Tingling in the hands and feet

Changes

- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Hair loss
- Sleep disorders
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory lapses
- Dizziness
- Weight gain
- Incontinence
- Bloating
- Allergies
- Brittle nails
- Changes in odour
- Irregular heartbeat
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Panic disorder

Menopausal symptoms can begin months or even years before an individual's periods stop and last around four years after the last period, although some people experience them for much longer and can need medication to alleviate the symptoms.

What can employees do to help themselves?

For people who find their menopausal symptoms are affecting their wellbeing and/or their capacity to work:

- Find out more about the menopause (see links at the end of this document).
- See your GP for advice on available treatment options.
- Discuss your needs with your line manager, or HR.
- Ask for a referral to occupational health to discuss support and possible work adjustments.
- Find support at work – it can help to talk to your colleagues, particularly those who are experiencing symptoms, for more understanding and to share coping strategies.
- Consider lifestyle changes depending on your symptoms and following advice from health professionals.
- This guidance from Henpicked has more information about approaching the conversation with your manager: [Menopause: how to have confident conversations with your manager - Henpicked](#)

How can employers help their employees?

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause policy guidelines.
- Use the Menopause Support Checklist (available from Menopause & Me Suffolk Libraries website).
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally. It is valuable to acknowledge what the individual is going through and though this is a normal stage of life, not dismiss how the individual is feeling, but advise that some adjustments can easily be made. Such conversations can identify support at work that can help the person with lived experience remain fully productive.

- If necessary, conduct a workstation assessment to help identify any physical adjustments that will be helpful. For example, control of workplace temperature and ventilation and see how they might be adapted to meet the needs of individuals. This might include having a desktop fan, or locating a workstation near an opening window, or away from a heat source.
- Consider flexible working or shift changes. If sleep is disturbed, later start times could be implemented. Enabling short breaks during working times may also be useful.
- Ensure easy access to toilets and where possible washing facilities.
- If you have access to Occupational Health, make a referral to them to identify any further support that may be needed or appropriate. This should only be done if it is applicable and requested by the person with lived experience.
- Encourage the employee to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP.
- Employees are entitled to expect respectful behaviours at work, including those that relate to their gender and age, and managers should take seriously any concerns employees raise in this regard.
- The provision of information may be helpful in these discussions and for more general awareness raising – see links at the end of this document.
- Well-being conversations – impact of health and lifestyle on menopausal symptoms.
- Managers should be mindful of the interaction of the menopause with existing conditions – some disabilities (such as epilepsy, rheumatoid arthritis, thyroid disease and Turners syndrome) can cause earlier menopause, and others may have symptoms exacerbated by the menopause. If in doubt seek advice from Occupational Health.
- If a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to a member of the HR team if available or to a female manager if their manager is male and they would prefer this.

This guidance from the CIPD has more information about approaching the conversation:
[A guide to managing menopause at work: guidance for line managers \(cipd.co.uk\)](https://www.cipd.co.uk/guidance/~/media/Download_Center/2019/04/190401_menopause_guidance_for_line_managers.pdf)

Agreeing changes at work

There should be steps towards agreeing changes at work to help a worker manage their symptoms when doing their job:

- Step 1 – an individual with concerns about the menopause or perimenopause may already have talked to their GP and/or a medical specialist.
- Step 2 – the individual's line manager and/or HR should be involved in confidential discussions with the individual about their menopause or perimenopause concerns, the effects they are having difficulties with and how they might need support.
- Step 3 – agree changes in writing and to have follow-up discussions to make sure the changes are working for both the individual and company.
- Step 4 – follow-up discussions need to be whenever necessary, as an individual's symptoms can fluctuate and/or alter. This means the adaptations at work may need to change.

Changes for example, might be as simple as:

- Providing a fan.
- Allowing the individual to take breaks when needed.
- Moving the individual's desk closer to a window that opens.
- Being flexible where possible over the individual's start and finish times to help them manage their symptoms: and,
- Allowing them to work from home when practical.

See Suffolk Libraries' [Menopause & Me](https://www.suffolklibraries.gov.uk/menopause) website for links and further information on the (peri)menopause.