

Hamp Nursery & Infants School



Menopause guidance

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Support
Services for
Education

MENOPAUSE GUIDANCE

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1. Introduction

This guidance will enable schools and academies to promote a positive attitude to the menopause and will enable them to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not exacerbate their symptoms.

This guidance sets out to:

- ensure all staff, including Headteachers, SLT and Governors understand what menopause is, can confidentially have constructive conversations about it and are clear on the policies effected by menopause;
- provide information about the potential symptoms of menopause and how women can be supported at work;
- enable women experiencing menopausal symptoms to feel confident to discuss it and ask for support and reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in the workplace.

2. What is the menopause?

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle including some transgender and non-binary people when oestrogen levels decline and menstruation stops. As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, it is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

3. When does it happen?

The menopause typically happens between age 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, each person's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51 but it can start much earlier or later than this.

The 'perimenopause' is the phase leading up to the menopause when the hormone balance starts to change. For some, this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties and in some cases can continue in this phase for up to ten years.

Premature menopause can occur before the age of 40, in some cases it can happen as early as the teens or twenties.

Medical or surgical menopause can occur suddenly at any age where the ovaries are removed or damaged, for example during cancer treatment.

While symptoms vary, experience is dependent on each individual and can include but are not limited to:

- hot flushes;
- lack of / disrupted sleep
- night sweats;
- low mood, anxiety and depression;
- dizziness;
- fatigue;
- memory loss and brain fog;
- low self-esteem
- palpitations

- headaches / migraine;
- recurrent urinary tract infections;
- joint or muscle pain;
- reduced concentration; and
- irregular and/or heavy periods.

Further information can be found on the [NHS website](#).

Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work. If a worker is treated unfairly because of the menopause and perimenopause, this may amount to discrimination under the provisions of The Equalities Act 2010 because, for example, of their sex and/or their age and/or on the grounds of disability (the effects of an employee's menopause will count as a disability if the symptoms have a long-term and substantial adverse effect on normal day-to-day-activities).

Employers have a duty to prevent workplace discrimination, to manage menopause in the workplace sensitively, and with dignity and respect and to make adjustments to ensure that women can work safely and comfortably through the menopause.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Schools and academies should commit to providing a safe working environment for all its employees by ensuring that any necessary adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

There are many different factors and personal circumstances that can affect how someone experiences the menopause, including those people with protected characteristics. In every case it is important not to make any assumptions and listen to the needs and concerns of the individual involved. Schools and academies should always aim to facilitate an open, understanding working environment.

Employer Responsibility:

Schools and academies should educate and inform Managers and employees to be aware of how the menopause can affect working women and transgender people, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support those experiencing them.

Where female members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their Line Manager, because he is a man, or someone much younger, or both, the school/ academy should ensure that an alternative contact is available. Confidentiality will always be respected.

Any risk assessments undertaken will consider the specific needs of menopausal staff and should be kept under review to reflect any fluctuations in symptoms. The risk assessment may include consideration of temperature and ventilation issues and will also address welfare issues, such as access to toilet facilities and cold water, during and outside break and lunch times.

Reasonable adjustments where necessary will be implemented to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. It is important to note that adjustments need to be considered on an individual basis and within the school environment in which they are working.

Headteacher/Line Manager Responsibility:

Headteachers/Line managers who work with staff who may be affected by the menopause should:

- familiarise themselves with this menopause guidance;
- provide a safe place to allow the member of staff to speak openly and honestly;
- be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially and allowing adequate time for the discussion;
- record and review regularly any specific needs that are identified (including reasonable adjustments that are agreed);
- be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance. If someone's performance suddenly dips, it is worth considering whether the menopause may be playing a part in this;
- seek advice from the school/academy HR Adviser and/or Occupational Health provider if necessary;
- ensure staff do not experience any detriment because they may need time off during this time. Any absences will be managed in line with the Sickness Absence Management policy.

Employee Responsibility:

- To inform their manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.
- To take responsibility for looking after their health.
- To be open and honest in conversations with their Line Manager.
- To contribute to a respectful and healthy working environment.
- To be willing to help and support their colleagues.
- To accept and support any necessary adjustments their colleagues request and are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

5. Points for Consideration

The following steps should be considered when working with the employee to identify any adjustments at work to help them manage their symptoms alongside fulfilling their roles:

Step 1 – an employee with concerns about the menopause or perimenopause may already have talked to their GP and may have talked to Care First, but if not, it may be helpful to signpost them to these services.

Step 2 - the employee's Line Manager should be involved in confidential discussions with the employee, about their menopause or perimenopause concerns, the effects they are having difficulties with and how they might need support.

A referral to Occupational Health should be considered as this will enable the school to discuss and plan with the employee any recommended adjustments which would help them manage their symptoms at work.

Step 3 - agree changes in writing and ensure regular reviews take place to make sure the changes are working for both parties and to address any fluctuations or changes in the employee's symptoms.

The chart below gives some examples of adjustments that may be helpful for various symptoms of the menopause, wherever they are operationally practicable to put into effect.

Symptom/s	Reasonable Adjustments / Support
Hot flushes, daytime sweats, palpitations.	<p>Make sure there is easy access to cold drinking water.</p> <p>Consider moving desks nearer the window or air conditioning unit.</p> <p>Supply fans at workstations.</p> <p>Allow additional breaks or time out and access to fresh air.</p> <p>Arrange for cover to be available so employees can leave their post if needed.</p> <p>Supply an alternative to nylon or close-fitting uniforms.</p> <p>Make sure PPE is appropriate in terms of size and materials.</p> <p>Consider temporary changes to duties, if possible, for example limiting the time spent in hot kitchens.</p> <p>Identify a cool/quiet room, if possible, where employee can take a break if required.</p>
Nighttime sweats and hot flushes, insomnia, or sleep disturbance.	<p>Consider offering flexible working such as temporary adjustments to work patterns or hours for example starting and finishing later.</p> <p>Consider allowing employees to work from home.</p>
Urinary problems/irregular or heavy periods.	<p>Make sure there is easy access to toilet and washroom facilities.</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks.</p> <p>Make sure there is easy access to cold drinking water.</p>
Joint or muscle pain.	<p>Make sure DSE assessment has been completed.</p> <p>Reduce the amount of manual handling required if appropriate and follow guidance and advice on manual handling.</p>
Headaches/Migraines.	<p>Make sure DSE assessment has been completed.</p> <p>Allow more frequent breaks from screen-based work.</p> <p>Consider moving desks to allow more access to natural light.</p> <p>Conduct a stress risk assessment if appropriate.</p>
Depression, anxiety, mood changes, loss of confidence, panic attacks, memory problems or difficulty concentrating.	<p>Meet regularly to offer support and review/revise any adjustments that have been made.</p> <p>Signpost to any relevant support networks including Care First, employee support networks within the school, Wellbeing Ambassadors/Champions within the school.</p> <p>Conduct a stress risk assessment if appropriate.</p> <p>Consider temporary adjustments to shift patterns or working hours as well as workloads.</p> <p>Allow flexible working or working from home but consider the positive and negative implications for the employee of this.</p>

In some cases, menopausal symptoms can be so serious that they affect the person's performance at work which should be managed proactively and positively.

Frequent intermittent periods of sickness absence relating to the menopause should be considered as part of any sickness absence management. Managers may also wish to refer to the guidance on Frequent Intermittent Absence.

Exploring the underlying cause of performance concerns and agreeing adjustments could help the employee perform to their full potential.

Where an employee wishes the school to consider a change to their work terms and conditions either on a temporary or permanent basis, the employee should complete a flexible working request to enable the school to consider the request to change their work patterns.

6. Useful resources

NHS guidance on menopause – [Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society) – www.womens-health-concern.org

British Menopause Society – <https://thebms.org.uk>

Support for premature menopause – www.daisynetwork.org

Faculty of Occupational Medicine – www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-foremployers/dealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause

Henpicked, Menopause in the Workplace – <https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk>

Menopause Café – ‘gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause’ – www.menopausecafe.net

Talking Menopause – www.talkingmenopause.co.uk

Menopause Support – <https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>