

Menopause Policy

Date:	November 2021
Next Review due:	November 2023

Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for a number of reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, gender transitioning, conditions needing hormone treatment, and menopause. These can bring about symptoms which could affect a colleague at work.

This policy focuses on menopause, and uses a few key terms:

Menopause: the point at which a woman's oestrogen levels decline, and she stops having periods. Menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years so it's best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

Perimenopause: this is the phase leading up to the menopause when a woman's hormone balance starts to change, and when she may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some women this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.

Principles

A quarter of menopausal women will experience debilitating symptoms – from hot flushes and night sweats to increased anxiety – and for some it forces them out of the workplace completely. This means that experienced middle-aged women are leaving the workforce in droves.

These women are likely to be at the top of their game, but without the right support, at the right time, they are unable to reach their full potential for schools to reap the benefits from. We need to protect this talent.

Menopause isn't openly talked about in the workplace; symptoms are personal and sometimes embarrassing. A large number of women find their symptoms negatively affect their job performance and many lose their confidence. Menopause shouldn't be a taboo, and everyone should feel confident to have a conversation with their line manager, especially when they need guidance and advice.

At WHS we aim to create an open culture where women feel comfortable to say they're struggling with symptoms. The menopause needn't be an awkward or embarrassing topic, and it certainly shouldn't mean that a woman needs to press pause on her working life. Often a few simple changes to someone's working environment can make a world of difference – enabling someone experiencing menopausal symptoms to continue performing and contributing to their full potential. Even just being able to talk openly can reduce the impact of someone's symptoms.

Who is this policy for?

WHS School aims to support all staff experiencing menopausal symptoms and help colleagues and line managers understand how they can support employees experiencing such symptoms.

Why this policy matters

The menopause is experienced by most women, usually between the ages of 45-55, though some women can experience it earlier than this, due to 'premature menopause' or surgery. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically; are different for everyone; and for a quarter of women they are severely debilitating. Symptoms can have a huge effect on a woman's comfort and performance when working. This policy is therefore imperative to ensure WHS School provides an inclusive and supportive working environment for women experiencing the menopause.

Symptoms vary greatly, and commonly include (but aren't limited to):

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory loss
- depression
- headaches
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- reduced concentration
- heavy periods

Research suggests that, for 30% of women, the recent global pandemic has made the physiological and mental symptoms of menopause worse.

Source: Survey by The Menopause Hub, April 2020

This policy sets out the support available to women before, during and after the menopause. It is designed to ensure women suffering with menopausal symptoms can feel empowered to ask for adjustments to ease such symptoms without embarrassment, can carry out their daily role in a safe working environment, and can have open discussions with colleagues and line managers so that they feel part of an inclusive culture at work.

Support and Adjustments

Minor adjustments to an employee's working environment can make a huge difference.

- **Desk Fans**
Fans can be obtained by sending an email request to our Business Manager, Ann Butler
- **Quiet meditation room**
A meditation room, located in the Hub, offers a cool, quiet and private space. Please speak with your line manager and the Finance Team, if you wish to make this space available.
- **Women only meetings**
We are looking to hold termly meet ups for women only, to discuss and debate issues (including menopause) in a safe, supportive and informative environment. These will be publicised once up and running.
- **Safe, supportive conversations**
WHS aims to facilitate an open and understanding working environment and so we encourage employees to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated, and the necessary support made available.

WHS will look to ensure that a group of identified staff have up to date knowledge and training on all things menopause related. These staff members will be available for support and open conversations about the menopause. Both female members of staff wanting personal advice and their line managers can seek support from these identified people.

Current experienced and trained staff:

- **Medical Support**

We encourage employees to speak to their GP when they are experiencing symptoms.

The menopause support app, Balance, offers extensive advice on all aspects of menopause.

A referral to occupational health can be requested by contacting Ann Butler.

- **Flexible working**

WHS has an established Flexible Working Policy which can be found on the website that allows employees to make a permanent change to their contract.

However, should an employee require a more temporary/flexible change to working arrangements, they should contact their line manager or Ann Butler, in the first instance.

Women experience menopausal symptoms differently and so adjustments would be considered in relation to the individual's needs.

- **Sickness/LoA**

Details of our Sickness Absence Policy can be found on our website. Whilst an employee can follow our usual procedures if they feel unfit for work, they should also feel they can be open about the reason for their menopause-related absence with their line manager without fear of being discriminated against.

- **Counselling**

It's good to talk! Open discussions with supportive people in school will enable women experiencing the menopause to feel part of an inclusive culture. This will often lead to supportive adjustments.

In some cases, menopause can affect women's mental health and specialist counselling support may be required. WHS has tried and tested counsellors that we are able to refer staff to if required.

[Line Managers](#)

All line managers will:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy.
- Be willing to have open discussions with employees about changes in their health including issues relating to the Menopause, treat the discussion sensitively and recognise that each individual's experience may differ, ensuring confidentiality where requested by the employee.
- Refer to the identified staff in the 'safe conversations' section above to discuss support and adjustments.
- Ensure on-going communication and agree a plan for review where appropriate.
- Implement any agreed adjustments.
- Ensure regular check-ins are in place to review any support and make any necessary changes to an employee's working environment or patterns that are required from both WHS's /the employee's perspective.

[Related Information](#)

The following are links to some external sites that you may find useful. We are aware there is a lot of guidance available and everyone is different so please use this as a guide only and do let us know if there are any links that should be added to this list:

- Menopause matters: <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/> which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- The Balance App: <https://balance-app.com/>
- The Daisy Network charity: <https://www.daisynetwork.org/> which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency;
- The Menopause Café: <https://www.menopausecafe.net/> which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause;
- Henpicked: <https://henpicked.net/> an online community that gives women a place to have their say, promote healthy debate and bring about positive change. They also provide 'lunch and learn' videos with industry wide experts that can be accessed here;
- MegsMenopause: <https://megsmenopause.com/> an 'honest and frank' look at all things menopause.
- We also recommend this practical guide for line managers from the CIPD: https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/line-manager-guide-to-menopause_tcm18-95174.pdf which offers guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach the conversations about it appropriately and sensitively