

Menopause Policy

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1. Policy

- 1.1 The aim of the University's Menopause Policy is to provide an inclusive and supportive working environment, which recognises the importance of being healthy and well at work.
- 1.2 Create an environment where colleagues feel comfortable talking about menopause.
- 1.3 Ensure colleagues understand what menopause is, and that managers are aware of symptoms, potential impact in a working environment and how they can support staff experiencing menopause symptoms at work.
- 1.4 To ensure that staff experiencing menopause symptoms feel able to discuss them, and can ask for support and reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Menopause** is defined as a biological state in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating, and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). Typically menopause happens between the ages of 45 and 55, but it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.
- 2.2 **Perimenopause** is the time leading up to a menopause when women may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be a considerable time before the menopause.
- 2.3 **Postmenopausal** is the time after the menopause has occurred.
- 2.4 **Early and Premature Menopause** is defined relative to age. Menopause before the age of 45 is called early menopause. Menopause before the age of 40 is called premature menopause

3. Symptoms

Not every woman is affected by the symptoms of menopause and not all women will need or want support or help during this time. Up to 75% of women do experience menopausal symptoms and 25% of those can be considered severe. Menopausal symptoms last on average for four years, but for some can last much longer. Symptoms can also fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees.

It should be noted that some women will have symptoms but might struggle and may not wish to ask for help with such a personal experience. Just because a woman may not be asking for help, it does not mean she may not be experiencing symptoms. Trans men and non-binary people may also experience menopause symptoms, and as such should be entitled to the same support as female staff who experience menopause symptoms.

The symptoms of menopause can be both physical and psychological, including (but not limited to):

- Hot flushes
- Reduced concentration
- Headaches
- Panic attacks / anxiety
- Heavy/light periods

- Loss of confidence
- Difficulty sleeping

Each of these symptoms can affect a colleague's comfort and performance at work. Those experiencing menopausal symptoms should feel confident in discussing their needs, to ask for support and for reasonable adjustments to be put in place, so they can continue working and play a full part in University life.

4. Available Support

4.1 If menopausal symptoms are affecting an employee's wellbeing, medical advice should be sought from a GP in the first instance (in accordance NICE guidelines).

4.2 Employees are encouraged to inform their line manager if they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that these are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification will also help line managers to understand the most appropriate way to support an employee's individual needs.

4.3 In agreement with the line manager, reasonable adjustments could include:

- Providing temperature control for the work area, such as a fan on the person's desk, enabling them to move near to a window, or away from a heat source
- Adapting prescribed clothing, such as permitting the removal of a jacket or lab coat when not needed
- Ensuring easy access to washroom facilities
- Ensuring storage space is available for a change of clothing
- Offering noise-reducing headphones to wear in open plan offices and work spaces
- Allowing short breaks in long meetings and ensuring regular breaks from workstations
- Agreeing to flexible working arrangements

This is not a definitive list of adjustments, and the University will consider additional suggestions put forward by the staff member or Occupational Health.

4.4 If adjustments are unsuccessful, or if the symptoms are very complex, managers can refer employees to Occupational Health (OH) for further advice and support. OH will discuss any concerns with the employee and provide support and advice to the manager and the employee.

4.5 If a member of staff is unable to speak with their manager about their menopause, they are welcomed to speak to their HR Business Partner.

5. Sources of support

- <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/> - provides accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options
- <https://www.daisynetwork.org/> - provides support for those experiencing premature menopause
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/treatment/> - NHS menopause advice and guidance
- <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/hr/health-and-wellbeing/sickness-absence-toolkit/menopause.aspx>

Relevant Policy Headings

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- **Impact Assessment date:** NA
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Appendix 1 - Roles and Responsibilities

Staff are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR and Occupational Health
- If a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, they can speak to HR, a Union representative
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues
- When an individual has wished to share this information with their colleague/s, respecting confidentiality and being supportive of adjustments their colleague is receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and understand the support they can provide to staff
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
- Agree with the individual how best they can be supported and any adjustments required
- Record adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:

- Refer the employee to Occupational Health
- Review Occupational Health advice and implement recommendations where reasonably practical
- Discuss further with HR and the employee

Occupational Health are responsible for:

- Carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing, providing advice and guidance in line with up-to-date research
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice
- Provide support and advice to HR and Line Managers in determining and agreeing adjustments, if required

Human Resources will:

- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy
- Offer support to employees affected by menopause symptoms