Woodcroft Primary School

Menopause Guidance

Co-ordinator responsible for the guidance: Finance Manager

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Purpose

The School is committed to supporting all staff who are going through the Menopause.
This how to guide defines the way in which the school can support staff, the options for time away from the workplace and signposting to the wider support that is available.

Scope

This how to guide applies to:

- Teachers including Leadership, Upper Pay Range, Main Pay Range and Unqualified Teachers
- Support Staff.

This how to guide does not apply to:

- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Agency workers.

The School expects all parties to maintain confidentiality throughout the application of this how to guide.

How to use this document

Principles

This document provides information on how to support staff as they go through the menopause during their working life.

How do I address my concern?

Concern	Refer to
Absence from work due to the menopause	Managing Sickness Absence policy and How to Guide
Time off due to the menopause that does not fall under sickness absence.	Guidance on Time Off
Changes to working arrangements, such as flexible working to support the individual during the menopause.	Procedure for managing flexible working requests

If you are unsure which policy to use, please contact Education Personnel Services.

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1. Introduction

The menopause is a natural and inevitable stage of life for the majority of women and some trans, gender fluid and non-binary individuals. For many, symptoms last about four years, but in some cases, they can last up to 12 years.
With schools being a predominantly female workforce, there is a need to understand and provide support in the workplace whilst individuals go through the menopause.
The menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms and although the majority of individuals may experience some symptoms, everyone is different. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees, with statistics showing that one in three will experience severe symptoms and for one in four, the symptoms will be mild. It is therefore important to recognise that there is no standard approach to take to support staff wellbeing and that each staff member will require different levels of support during the different stages of their menopause.

2. Intended outcomes

The aims of this how to guide are to:

- support an individual who is going through the menopause
- signpost to specialist menopause support services
- provide guidance to managers on the menopause, how to have sensitive discussions and how to support staff during this time
- raise wider awareness and understanding amongst staff about the menopause
- set out options for time away from the workplace.

3. Key definitions

Menstruation (or period): Is normal vaginal bleeding that occurs as part of a woman's monthly menstrual cycle.
Every 21-40 days, rising levels of the hormone oestrogen cause the ovary to develop and release an egg (ovulation) as the body prepares for pregnancy. If pregnancy does not occur, the egg is reabsorbed into the body. Levels of oestrogen and progesterone fall, and the womb lining comes away and leaves the body as a period (the menstrual flow).
Premature menopause (or premature ovarian insufficiency): Is the term used for those who experience menopause before 40.
The NHS estimates that 1 in every 100 women will experience premature menopause and although there is often no clear cause for the early onset of menopause, it can be as a result of surgery (for example hysterectomy, oophorectomy), illness or treatment (such as radiotherapy or chemotherapy).
A GP should be able to tell if an individual is in perimenopause or menopause based on their age, symptoms and how often they are menstruating, but individuals may be offered a blood test if they meet the relevant criteria.
Perimenopause: A period of time leading up to the menopause when hormone production starts to reduce, and some may start to experience menopausal symptoms.

Menopause: The transitional period when the ovaries stop producing eggs and the level of oestrogen declines causing menstruation to cease.
It also means the individual is no longer able to get pregnant naturally. Most will experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55 but it can occur at any time up to mid-60s.
Post-menopause: A term used when periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended and may continue for years.
Medical or surgical menopause: The surgical removal of ovaries can trigger the menopause and increase the risks of cancer, heart disease, weaker bones, depression, and anxiety.
Andropause ('Male menopause'): Is a term used to describe the symptoms that are associated with the decrease in the hormone testosterone.
It typically occurs in those between the ages of 40 and 60, however, not all will experience these symptoms and consequently will not go through the 'male menopause'.
Hormone replacement therapy (HRT): Is a form of hormone therapy used to treat symptoms associated with the menopause.

4. Symptoms

The menopause begins when the ovaries stop producing the hormones, oestrogen and progesterone, and these changing levels of hormones are thought to be the cause of menopausal symptoms in some.
The period of hormonal change generally lasts from 4 to 8 years and during this time, staff may experience some of the symptoms below.
These symptoms can have a significant impact on the individual's work and day to day activities. However, each individual's experience of the menopause could differ as the number of symptoms can vary. The symptoms may not occur continuously, and symptoms can range from very mild to severe).
List of symptoms:

- Hot flushes or flashes
- Night sweats
- Palpitations
- Sleep disturbances
- Fatigue
- Poor concentration and memory
- Weight gain
- Irritability
- Mood disturbances
- Skin changes (dryness, acne, irritation, dry eyes)
- Anxiety attacks
- Depression
- Aches and pains including muscle and joint stiffness
- Increased risk of osteoporosis post menopause
- Increased risk of cardiovascular disease
- Irregular periods which can become heavier

- Taking longer to recover from illness
- Urinary problems
- Loss of confidence / embarrassment
- Headaches and migraines.
- Menopausal hair loss.

It is acknowledged that symptoms can be exacerbated by specific situations in the work context. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause a hot flush, dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations.
Sleep-disorder symptoms can reduce the ability for women to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence may impact on making important decisions and low mood and anxiety may impact on relationships with colleagues.
Staff experiencing the menopause are encouraged to inform their manager if they need support with symptoms and the impact this may have on their work, so that appropriate support can be provided.

5. **Alleviating symptoms**

A healthy lifestyle can minimise the effects of the menopause and therefore staff are encouraged to follow the guidance below to help alleviate some symptoms.

- Eat regularly and a balanced healthy diet
- Drink plenty of water
- Give up smoking
- Ensure alcohol intake is at or below recommended levels (people are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis. No more than three units in one day and have at least two alcohol-free days in a week)
- Avoid hot flush triggers such as spicy foods
- Consider techniques such as mindfulness to help manage moods and outlook https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/
- Exercise regularly to maintain fitness and aerobic capacity and carry out weight-bearing exercise to maintain bone density
- Consult with their GP on their symptoms and management of the menopause to ensure that any symptoms are not due to other causes
- Seek Occupational Health & Wellbeing advice (if required)
- Reduce caffeine, monosodium glutamate/salt and sugar.
- Discuss symptoms and appropriate workplace adjustments with your manager or with the alternative contact (see above)
- Contact the individual assistance programme (where purchased by the school and if required)
- At night, wear loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats.

6. Support

As menopause is expected to last for 12 months or more, the School should support an individual who is going through the menopause by considering workplace adjustments as appropriate. The aim for all parties is to ensure that relevant support is put in place to minimise sickness absence where possible and enable individuals to continue to perform their role on a day to day basis and to the best of their ability whilst they are going through the menopause. Not all men will go through the 'male menopause' and therefore men are unlikely to be covered by the Equality Act 2010. They can however access the support available, as listed in external resources at the end of this guidance document.

The Managing Sickness Absence Policy and How to Guide provide information and procedural guidance on how to manage sickness absence. Managers should consider the reason for absence when managing absence levels and provide relevant support/reasonable adjustments where appropriate. The manager should check that sickness/other time away from the workplace records are accurately recorded.

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience, and that staff may find it difficult to share such personal and sensitive information with their manager. However, staff are encouraged to be open and honest with their manager as this will enable the manager to understand the circumstances and to provide appropriate support.

7. How to have a sensitive conversation

Managers should be approachable, with a focus on finding solutions as the easier they make it for an individual to talk to them the easier it will be to identify the support needed.

Menopause can have an impact on an individual's confidence, which may make having a conversation with a manager even more daunting.

How to have a sensitive conversation:

- Do your research first, ensuring it is relevant to the individual's specific circumstances
- Make sure that you will not be disturbed
- Ask open questions
- Maintain good eye contact
- Listen to what is being said
- Be empathetic and show understanding
- Understand that it is difficult for the individual to talk to you about the menopause
- Recognise that not all staff will have the same experience of the menopause and may need different support
- Do not make assumptions
- Advise on ways in which they can be supported
- Individual and manager to note actions (as appropriate)
- Refer them to the Employee Assistance Programme where this is purchased by the school and the additional support and resources within this How to Guide.

8. Reasonable adjustments and risk assessments

Managers should discuss appropriate workplace adjustments with the individual and consider whether undertaking a risk assessment is required.
Further advice is available in the Manual of Personnel Practice, but some examples of workplace adjustments could include (although this list is not exhaustive):
The use of technology where this is helpful e.g., reminders or note taking
Easy access to a toilet and the ability to leave the classroom, if necessary, to go to the toilet during lesson periods

- Access to fans
- Access to flexible working
- Regular 1-1 meetings
- Time to talk with a colleague or medical professional
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments
- Support to minimise workplace stress and workload
- Wellbeing/welfare and support requirements, signposting to support that is available as and when required
- Considering whether an Occupational Health referral is required
- Continued options for time away from the workplace
- Flexibility over dress codes
- Access to sufficient storage for sanitary products, deodorant, and a change of clothing.
- Access to a quiet place to work and/or ability and/or ability to undertake some work at home rather than in school (e.g., PPA time) to help concentration
- Adjustment to break/duties rota

Managers need to take into account both business and individual needs when determining whether adjustments are reasonable. The support and adjustments should be documented accordingly, and consideration should be given as to whether a trial period and/or review period is appropriate.
In some cases, menopausal symptoms can be so serious that they may affect an individual's performance at work. In these circumstances, the manager and the individual should work together to identify and consider any support and adjustments which will further support the individual to perform in their role. It may be necessary to seek Occupational Health and/or Education Personnel Services advice.
Schools may want to consider requests for flexibility around taking of breaks and particularly engage in dialogue about how any need to leave the classroom at short notice could be accommodated and managed, ensuring cover, as necessary.
Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope with. In these circumstances, the manager and the individual should work together to identify and consider any reasonable workplace adjustments which will further support the individual and in conjunction with Occupational Health (if required).

9. Undertake regular reviews with the individual

An individual's menopausal symptoms can fluctuate and/or alter over time, therefore it is important that regular discussions take place to ensure that the support and/or workplace adjustments still meet all parties needs and/or is amended as appropriate. Any changes should be documented accordingly, especially when a trial period and/or review period has been agreed.
The manager should continue to support the individual as agreed between parties. The manager should be conscious of any signs that the individual may not be coping and discuss this sensitively and in private with the individual where possible.

10. Time away from work

The following types of leave may be appropriate:
Managers are encouraged to discuss any issues with the individual and, where possible, allow time away from the workplace as appropriate to the individual's needs.
Where the individual is a support staff member on a 52-week contract, they may request annual leave. Requests beyond annual leave or from teachers or support staff on term time only contracts should be treated in line with the school's normal discretions for time off and as such are likely to be unpaid.

The procedure for requesting flexible working provides details of arrangements where individuals wish to a request to change their working hours or how work is undertaken.

11. Legal considerations

In order for menopause to be classed as a disability in England and Wales, the law requires that the condition must have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the individual's ability to carry out day to day activities. It should not automatically be assumed that those going through the menopause will attract protection in the workplace provided by The Equality Act 2010, but it is advisable to look at each case on its own merits, with a specific focus on making adjustments in the workplace. The failure to make reasonable adjustments could amount to discrimination on the grounds of sex, disability and/or age.

12. Roles and responsibilities

As the manager you are responsible for:

- being aware of the support available to staff going through the menopause and supporting the individual from a work perspective
- being accessible to the individual to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work-life and the support available to them
- considering adjustments to the workplace and role which are necessary to address any issue(s) identified, and deciding whether to implement where reasonable and whether a risk assessment is necessary

- maintaining appropriate standards of confidentiality
- ensuring all requests for support or adjustments are dealt with in accordance with GDPR/ the data protection policy
- signposting the individual to support that is available to them and encouraging them to access the support and adjustments offered
- ensure that absences associated with menopausal symptoms are accurately captured
- ensure that all staff are aware of this How to Guide and understand their responsibilities
- promote a positive attitude to discussions around health issues.

All staff are encouraged to:

- talk to their manager to ensure they are supported during the menopause
- provide their manager with adequate information about the reason for absence so that this can be considered appropriately and recorded accurately
- access support that is available to them and take personal responsibility to look after their health

Where required, the HR representative who is supporting the manager is responsible for:

- advising on application of this guidance
- supporting with case management

The Trade Union representative or work colleague is responsible for:

- supporting their member/ colleague

13. Internal Support

Headteachers/manager support

Any queries can be directed to Education Personnel Services on 02380 383500 or eps.consultants@hants.gov.uk

For Schools which subscribe to Hampshire County Council's Occupational Health Service, staff and managers can access the Occupational Health (OH) Advice Line by telephoning **023 8062 6600** (8am – 4pm weekdays). The OH Advice Line can support with any health-related query.

Individual Support

Access to free, confidential, and impartial support is available to staff where schools purchase the SLA on 0800 030 5182.

A professional association or trade union representative can offer information and workplace support as well as signposting to useful support organisations. Members of a union can contact their local office to find out about the support available and discuss specific issues.

The GP is the most appropriate source of advice and support for those experiencing

menopausal symptoms. A GP will be able to explore any relevant tests, give advice and provide treatment that is tailored to the individual's needs.

14. External resources / websites

ACAS: https://archive.acas.org.uk/menopause

Faculty of Occupational Medicine: http://www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-for-employers/%20dealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause

NHS: http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx

NHS ('male menopause'): https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause/

NICE: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/Menopause

Most of the professional associations provide additional guidance and advice on the menopause:

ASCL: https://www.ascl.org.uk/Help-and-Advice/Leadership-and-governance/Health,-safety-and-safeguarding/Guidance-for- employers-on-supporting-staff-with-me

NAHT: https://www.naht.org.uk/advice-and-support/management/the-menopause/

NASUWT: https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/equalities/under-represented-groups/women/managing-the-menopause-in-the-workplace.html

NEU: https://neu.org.uk/menopause