



Menopause Policy

Supporting the Wellbeing of our
employees at work during
Menopause

The Axholme Academy

June 2022

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Introduction

The menopause can have significant effects on your personal life and work life.

This policy sets out the rights of people experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them. It applies to all those that experience menopause symptoms, regardless of gender. We recognise that people of all genders can experience menopause symptoms and have specifically considered the needs of trans and non-binary employees when developing this policy. If you need more information about how this policy might apply to you, please speak to your line manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

This policy should be read alongside our policies on Flexible Working, Wellbeing, Equal Opportunities, and Sickness and Absence Management. It does not form part of your employment contract and we may update it at any time. Axholme Academy would like to thank colleagues within Sue Ryder for their support with this policy.

Aims of the policy

- To support you to stay in work during the stages of menopause
- To raise awareness of menopause, the related issues and the impact it can have on colleagues
- To break the stigma and taboo surrounding the menopause at work and to promote an environment in which everyone feels confident in discussing menopausal issues and to ask for support and adjustments if required
- To provide guidance and direction on how to support people who raise menopausal issues not only for the individuals experiencing the menopause but also for anyone who may be affected indirectly which may include managers, colleagues, partners and family members
- To inform line managers of the potential symptoms of menopause, how this can affect people and what can be done to offer support, including reasonable adjustments

What is the menopause?

The menopause is a natural event during your life, during which you stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, everybody's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can sometimes begin before the age of 40. There are three stages of the menopause:

- Perimenopause
- Menopause
- Post menopause

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. You may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause. Some people experience premature or medically induced menopause and it's important to recognise that these may bring additional challenges, due to symptoms often being experienced more suddenly and severely

We recognise that some trans and non-binary people might experience some symptoms but potentially not all that might be experienced by cis women. Trans people can also experience menopausal symptoms if they have to change, reduce or stop hormones.

While symptoms vary greatly, they commonly include:

- hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest)
- night sweats (hot flushes which happen at night)
- changes to periods – irregular, light or heavy bleeding
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Headaches
- Weight gain
- feeling the heart racing and palpitations;
- difficulty sleeping, resulting in tiredness and irritability
- changes in mood, such as feeling tired, irritable
- anxiety / depression
- dizziness
- fatigue
- difficulty concentrating;
- poor memory
- lack of confidence
- urinary problems, such as recurrent urinary tract infections and loss of bladder control

Some people may experience none or very few of these symptoms, whilst others may experience many or all. The experiences of symptoms can range from very mild to very severe and debilitating.

Each of these symptoms can affect your comfort and performance at work. We are committed to providing a safe working environment for everyone and therefore to ensuring that adjustments are made for those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Available support

We aim to facilitate an open, understanding working environment to increase awareness and in which all our employees feel informed about the menopause and it becomes a normal part of the health and wellbeing conversation. If you are going through the menopause or menopause transition, you will have help in coping with its effects so that you can continue to do your job successfully

You are encouraged to inform your line manager if you are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that they are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as an individual instance of ill health. Early notification will also help your line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support your individual needs. Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team instead. We know that the menopause is a very personal matter, so we will not raise it with you even if we think you are displaying symptoms. We might ask how you are, in general terms and you can then decide whether to talk to us about the menopause or not.

External sources of help and support for employees and managers can be found at the following:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for those experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency; and
- the [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.

Through training and raising awareness of the symptoms and related issues, we promote an organisation-wide understanding of what the menopause means for those going through it. This is essential to building a culture of openness, trust, sensitivity and respect around what is a challenging time of life.

Supporting our colleagues

We ask you to be aware that the menopause may affect others that you work with and that sometimes you will need to make certain things easier for them. That might include accepting that some adjustments need to be made to a person's role, their working environment or their working day. We may not be able to tell you about any menopause-related issues that a particular colleague is experiencing. We need you to accept that and respect their privacy. If you treat a colleague badly (including making unwanted comments or jokes) because of their menopause symptoms, you could be disciplined.

What you can expect from discussions around menopause

We have a four-step procedure that applies to discussions around the menopause and the action we'll take:

Step 1

- Speaking with your GP or medical specialist about your menopause-related concerns could be a good place for you to start. This is not necessary in order to access support or adjustments at work, but may help you to access the right medical support.
- You can also talk to your line manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Step 2:

- Meet with your manager. You can expect to have a private, friendly, honest and constructive conversation.

We will discuss with you some ideas that could make things easier for you. Adjustments will depend on different factors, including your needs and the budget we have available, but things we might talk to you about include the following:

- modifying our appearance code
- making fresh cool drinking water easily accessible
- giving you a desk fan
- making a room available for rest
- altering some aspects of your duties
- access to counseling
- Occupational Health

Your conversation with your manager will be confidential. They will probably need to discuss issues and possible solutions with others such as a Senior Leader or Occupational Health. Those people will be subject to duties of confidentiality and information will only be shared with your permission. Confidentiality about trans status will always be respected.

- We will not talk to your colleagues about the menopause-related difficulties you are having unless you ask us to
- We will keep notes of the things we discuss and will comply with our data protection responsibilities in respect of the information that passes between us

Step 3

- Taking account of any specialist advice, we will agree with you the adjustments that we will make
- We will meet with you to make sure that the adjustments are working for you and for us. If any modifications are needed, or if anything new needs to be put in place, we will discuss that with you.

Step 4

- We will meet with you on an ongoing basis to check that your symptoms are being managed effectively. We will do this annually, or more frequently if necessary.

You may find that your symptoms change over time. You should tell us if that happens so that we can look at making further or alternative adjustments. Once your symptoms pass, we would expect you to tell us, and we may discuss removing the adjustments that have been put in place. We may need to consult with Occupational Health at various points to ensure everything is being done that should be done.

Relevant legislation

We will consider our duty of care in the context of the following legislation in our approach to supporting colleagues during the stages of menopause

- The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- The Equality Act (2010)

Feedback

If you have any feedback on this policy, including feedback on how inclusive the policy is, we'd love to hear it. Please contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team.