



*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full
(John 10:10)*

MENOPAUSE AT WORK POLICY

This policy is taken from the OLHOC Trust Handbook of Statutory policies and should be read in conjunction with the other policies within the document.

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This policy outlines guidance for the Trust to help provide staff with the right support to better manage menopausal symptoms at work.

This policy does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not intended to have any contractual effect. The Trust reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

The menopause is a natural stage of life experienced by most women, although it may also affect trans, non-binary and intersex individuals. However, it remains a stigma or a taboo subject in many workplaces.

Nearly 3 out of 4 individuals experiencing menopausal symptoms are in work, and previous studies have shown that most are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager and ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.

The menopausal transition need not be an awkward topic and it should not be regarded solely as a female issue. The Trust's aim is to create an inclusive working environment where employees feel confident to discuss the symptoms they are experiencing, how it may be affecting their personal and work life and discuss any practical adjustments that they may benefit from.

Whilst not every individual will suffer with their symptoms, supporting those who do may help improve their experience at work.

The Trust wants to enable everyone to understand what the menopause is and to encourage staff to openly talk about it, without embarrassment.

1. What is Menopause?

- 1.1. The menopause is defined as the biological stage when an individual stops menstruating and reaches the end of their natural reproductive life.
- 1.2. The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as oestrogen levels decline. In the UK, the average age to reach the menopause is 51, but around 1 in 100 individuals experience the menopause before 40 years of age (known as premature menopause).

1.3. Before and after experiencing the menopause, individuals may experience perimenopause and postmenopause, these are defined as:

1.3.1. **Perimenopause** refers to the time leading up to the menopause, during which there is a natural transition into menopause, marking the end of an individual's reproductive years.

1.3.2. **Postmenopause** is the time after menopause when an individual has not experienced a period for over a year. Postmenopause, an individual will no longer have periods but may continue to experience symptoms of menopause. As a result of lower levels of oestrogen, postmenopausal individuals are at an increased risk for several health conditions, such as osteoporosis and heart disease.

2. Symptoms of the Menopause

2.1. Individuals may experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with the menopause transition; it is important to note that these symptoms may fluctuate and may be felt to varying degrees. Not everyone going through menopause will notice every symptom, or even need help or support but some may experience symptoms, which may be quite severe and have a significant impact on their everyday activities. Common symptoms include, but are not limited to:

2.1.1. hot flushes

2.1.2. difficulty sleeping and night sweats

2.1.3. feeling tired and lacking energy

2.1.4. psychological issues such as anxiety and/or depression, panic attacks, etc.

2.1.5. mood swings

2.1.6. problems with memory and poor concentration

2.1.7. headaches including migraines

2.1.8. recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)

2.1.9. palpitations

2.1.10. muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains.

2.2. Menopausal symptoms can last for up to several years after the last period, although some people may experience them for much longer.

3. The 'Male Menopause'

- 3.1. When men reach their late 40s to early 50s, some may develop certain physical and psychological symptoms that may have a significant impact on their everyday activities.
- 3.2. The term 'Male Menopause' is often used to describe decreasing testosterone levels related to aging. However, aging-related hormone changes in women and men are different. In women, ovulation ends and hormone production decreased over a relatively short time (known as menopause). In men, production of testosterone and other hormones decline over a period of many years.
- 3.3. The gradual decline in testosterone levels is known as late-onset hypogonadism or age-related low testosterone. This may go unnoticed and there may be no symptoms. However, for some, there may be associated symptoms, but in many cases these are not specific to low testosterone and may be caused by a person's age, medication or other medical conditions instead.
- 3.4. Sometimes a "midlife crisis" may be responsible for these symptoms; this can happen when men think they have reached life's halfway stage. Alternatively, it may be the result of lifestyle factors or psychological issues such as stress, anxiety or depression.
- 3.5. Men are equally encouraged to raise any concerns they have with their line manager and discuss ways in which the Trust can support them, which may include a referral to Occupational Health.

4. Symptoms of the 'Male Menopause'

- 4.1. Men may experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with the 'male menopause'; it is important to note that these symptoms may fluctuate and may be felt to varying degrees. Common symptoms that may be experienced by men include, but are not limited to:
 - 4.1.1. mood swings and irritability
 - 4.1.2. Psychological issues such as anxiety and/or depression, panic attacks, etc.
 - 4.1.3. loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise
 - 4.1.4. a general lack of enthusiasm or energy
 - 4.1.5. difficulty sleeping at night or increased tiredness
 - 4.1.6. poor concentration and short-term memory
 - 4.1.7. lowered self-esteem

5. Scope and Purpose of this Policy

- 5.1. It is important to note that experiencing any of the above symptoms set out in this policy may pose a challenge for both men and women within the workplace. It may influence the way an employee previously handled their responsibilities and relationships at work; for example, they may find certain responsibilities more stressful than before, concentration may lapse from time to time and they may require more support than previously needed. In addition, they may feel physically unwell and require more time off work. Therefore, the Trust is committed to providing the appropriate support to employees going through the menopause or 'male menopause' and will aim to make adjustments where reasonably practical, on a confidential basis where possible. This may include but is not limited to:
 - 5.1.1. promoting a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement, allowing employees to engage in discussions about the menopause;
 - 5.1.2. educating and informing members of the Senior Leadership Team, Line Managers, members of the Local Governing Body and academy Business Managers, regarding the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support affected staff at work;
 - 5.1.3. ensuring staff suffering with menopausal symptoms feel confident to engage in discussions surrounding this and to ask for support and any reasonable adjustments that will help them to enable them to continue to be successful within their roles;
 - 5.1.4. facilitating requests for flexible working request where reasonably practicable in accordance with the Trust's Flexible Working Policy;
 - 5.1.5. providing support and services, such as occupational health referrals, for staff affected by or absent by reason of the menopause, where appropriate;
 - 5.1.6. ensuring risk assessments include or specifically address menopausal symptoms; and
 - 5.1.7. maintaining an appraisal process to ensure the suitability of workloads, supported by a capability procedure.
- 5.2. Additionally, in recognition of menopausal symptoms, the Trust acknowledges that increased levels of stress can be a genuine problem and should be considered when supporting applicable individuals.
- 5.3. The Trust wishes to support employees in their personal circumstances and will make necessary accommodations for those experiencing the menopause. However, it is important that the effective operation of the Trust and its academies are not adversely affected.

- 5.4. Staff are encouraged to talk to their line manager if they are struggling with any of their symptoms. However, if they do not feel comfortable talking to their line manager, then they should raise their concerns with the CEO / Principal / Head Teacher.
- 5.5. Staff may also discuss their concerns in confidence by contacting Education Support the Employee Assistance Helpline on 08000 562 561.
- 5.6. The CEO / Principal / Head Teacher will have responsibility for informing all staff of this policy and their role in its implementation.

6. Absence due to Menopausal Symptoms

- 6.1. If a member of staff is absent due to the menopausal symptoms they are experiencing, they are required to follow the Trust's sickness absence reporting procedure.
- 6.2. The Trust will take into account any absences due to the menopause and may adjust its sickness absence procedure as appropriate.

7. Confidentiality

- 7.1. Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. In order to facilitate the Trust's aims to promote a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement, to allow employees to engage in discussions about menopause; every member of staff will be responsible for observing a high level of confidentiality where required, whether another member of staff has confided in them, supporting a colleague who is suffering from menopausal symptoms or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a policy or procedure.
- 7.2. A breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action in accordance with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 7.3. There may occasions when matters reported by staff suffering from certain menopausal symptoms (such as stress) may have to be brought to the attention of a third party. For example, where duties may need to be reallocated to alleviate stress. If this is the case, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.
- 7.4. The Trust will monitor the development and distribution of good practice, the recognition of the symptoms related to the menopause, awareness of and effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.