



The
Affinity
Federation

Willenhall Community Primary School and **Whitmore Park** Primary School

Menopause Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Menopause is a normal part of some employee's lives and marks the end of their reproductive cycle. For many reasons it may not be an easy time in their life, and so it is imperative that employees who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect. Whitmore Park Primary School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all employees and recognises that some employees may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause.

Whitmore Park Primary School has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time and ensure that the workplace will collaboratively support menopause symptoms. Whitmore Park Primary School is committed to ensuring that employees feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly and welcomes confidential discussion without embarrassment. It is important that employees are able to discuss how they are feeling and ask for support and/or adjustments in order to continue to work safely and effectively. For this reason, the menopause at work is an issue for all employees.

The policy acknowledges that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the menopause. All stakeholders agree to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support employees experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse.

This policy is part of Whitmore Park Primary School's commitment to equality and diversity. We are committed to creating a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment. This policy seeks to improve the welfare of individual employees, retain valued employees, improve morale and performance, raise awareness and enhance the reputation of Whitmore Park Primary School as an employer of choice.

2. Aims

The aim of this policy is:

- To educate and inform all employees about the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support employees at work;
- To understand the menopause and related issues, and how they can affect employees;
- To raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause;
- To enable support for employees experiencing the menopause or symptoms of the menopause;
- To outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available;
- To create an environment where employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments and any additional support at work;
- To reduce sickness absence, performance issues and turnover that may arise due to menopausal symptoms.

3. Legislative compliance

This policy is fully compliant with the following legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, GB Regulations 4;
- Public Sector Equality Duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010;
- Equality Act 2010.

4. Equality and Diversity

Research has shown that there are differences in biological and hormonal changes in different races and ethnicity. There are also differences among employee's perceptions, attitudes and expectations surrounding menopause and this is sometimes influenced by their race, culture and ethnicity. Whitmore Park Primary School aim to raise awareness, open up conversations and help people seek help.

Whitmore Park Primary School are aware that not every transgender, non-binary and intersex person takes hormones, as a person can change their gender expression without medical intervention. Therefore, some transgender, non-binary and intersex people may experience the menopause and symptoms of menopause. Whitmore Park Primary School understands that transgender, non-binary and intersex people may be disadvantaged in relation to access to services. We aim to provide specific support or information that may be needed for transgender, non-binary and intersex people experiencing menopause.

The menopause can exacerbate the symptoms of existing impairments and cause flare ups in underlying health conditions. Employees with a disability may need a review of their reasonable adjustments at this time.

5. Definitions

Whitmore Park Primary School recognises that the experience of the menopause may differ greatly for employees. Some transgender employees may experience natural menopausal symptoms or pseudo-menopausal symptoms related to their hormone replacement therapy. Some non-binary people may experience menopausal symptoms.

Definitions of the stages of menopause are as follows:

Perimenopause

The perimenopause is the period in an employee's life when they start to experience hormonal fluctuations and changes to their periods. The average time for a person to be perimenopausal is between four to five years. During this time, periods may become increasingly heavy and irregular, meaning it is vitally important for employee's experiencing symptoms to be close to toilet facilities. For some employee's the symptoms during this time can be worse than the actual menopause.

Menopause

A person is described as being menopausal when they have gone 12 months without a period. The average age for a person to reach the menopause in the UK is 51. This may vary depending upon ethnic origin.

Post-menopausal

This is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a person has not had a period for 12 consecutive months. The average time for person experiencing symptoms of the menopause is five years, but many people experience symptoms for up to ten years and 3% of people will experience symptoms for the rest of their lives.

Post menopausal people have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis and school leaders and line managers should be aware of this.

6. Symptoms of menopause

Menopausal symptoms could be of a psychological or physical nature, and may include:

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate;
- Heavy and/or painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic;
- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome, sleep disturbance and fatigue;
- Mental health symptoms; low mood and feelings of depression or sadness, anger or irritability, anxiety and panic attacks, low self-esteem and loss of confidence;
- Memory loss, ‘brain fog’ and lack of concentration;
- Urinary problems – more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal;
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort;
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness;
- Weight gain;
- Headaches and migraines;
- Menopausal hair loss;
- Loss of libido;
- Osteoporosis – the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone thinning disease osteoporosis;
- Side effects of hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope with.

7. Support for employees experiencing the menopause

This policy recognises that there are many workplace factors which can make working life more difficult for employees experiencing the menopause and which may make symptoms worse.

Whitmore Park Primary School will encourage school leaders, line managers and employees to be aware of how the menopause can affect people, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support employees experiencing them.

Where employees feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, because they are, for example, a man, or someone much younger, or both, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. Support can also be obtained from Trade Union Workplace/Health & Safety Representatives. Confidentiality will always be respected.

Whitmore Park Primary School will make reasonable adjustments where possible to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace will collaboratively support menopause symptoms. Please refer to **appendix 3** for examples of reasonable adjustments to consider. The examples contained within **appendix 3** are not a definitive list and we will actively take on board other suggestions.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

It is recognised that everyone who works at Whitmore Park Primary School has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all employees, including those experiencing the menopause.

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health;
- Informing their line manager if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support;
- Being open and honest in conversations with their manager, HR and Occupational Health;
- Contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment;
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues;
- Accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.
- If an employee is unable to speak to their line manager, or if they perceive their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to HR/Occupational Health Service/Trade Union Health & Safety or workplace representative.

Line managers will:

- Familiarise themselves with this Menopause Policy and guidance/toolkit;
- Be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance (i.e., if someone's performance suddenly dips, consideration will be given as to whether the menopause may be playing a part of this);
- Encourage the employee to speak openly and honestly;

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- Be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of this conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially and allowing adequate time for the discussion;
- Listen and, wherever possible, respond sympathetically to any requests for reasonable adjustments at work;
- Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented, via the Personal Adjustment Passport;
- Consider risk assessments as required (carried out by a 'competent' person);
- Ensure ongoing dialogue;
- Ensure all agreed adjustments are adhered to and reviewed as regularly as necessary;
- Where necessary, engage with Occupational Health and HR particularly where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic;
- Attend menopause training events;
- Understand the Promoting Health at Work Policy and Mental Health Policy.

Employee and management guidance can be found in the Toolkit in **appendix 1** and **2**.
Examples of reasonable adjustments can be found in appendix 3.

Trade Unions Health & Safety/Workplace Representatives will:

- Provide support to members.

9. Additional help and support

Counselling Services/Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):

- Access to counselling is provided face to face and via TEAMs. To make an appointment - tel: [02476833285](tel:02476833285).
[email: OHSW@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:OHSW@coventry.gov.uk)
- EAP Tel: 03303 800 658
- Mental Health Support Service is provided face to face and via TEAMs. To make an appointment - tel: [02476833285](tel:02476833285).
[email: OHSW@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:OHSW@coventry.gov.uk)

The British Menopause Society

<https://thebms.org.uk/>

Daisy Network

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/menopause-workplace-guidance-employers>

The Menopause Exchange

<https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

Menopause matters

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

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Mental Health UK

<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/menopause-and-mental-health/>

NHS menopause pages

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

10. Review and monitoring

To ensure that we are meeting our public sector equality duty, we will monitor the impact of this policy by reference to the protected characteristics of staff (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). The results will be shared (anonymised where appropriate) with the recognised Trade Unions.

This policy will be reviewed jointly by Whitmore Park Primary School and the recognised Trade Unions on a regular basis.

Appendix 1 – Employee self-management checklist

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence.

Consider:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP;
- Discussing symptoms with your line manager or another suitable person and with your trade union rep and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments;
- Discussing symptoms with Occupational Health;
- Look into the information available from the agencies listed in section 9, Additional help and support;
- Self-referral for Counselling Services or the Employee Assistance Programme (contact details listed in section 9, Additional help and support).

Employees are also encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms such as:

- Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms, in keeping bones healthy and in not gaining weight;
- Drinking plenty of water;
- Exercising regularly - to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood and maintain aerobic fitness levels;
- Not smoking – to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions such as cancer, heart disease and stroke;
- Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food – all of which can trigger hot flushes;
- Having access to natural light;
- Staying cool at night – wearing loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats;
- Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation – to reduce stress levels and improve mood (through, for example, activities such as mindfulness, yoga and tai chi);
- Trying vaginal lubricant or moisturiser – available from shops and pharmacies for anyone experiencing vaginal dryness;

Appendix 2 – Management guidance for informal discussions

Managers should familiarise themselves with the menopause before conducting a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their situation.

The menopause is a natural part of ageing which usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age. It occurs as a direct result of an individual's oestrogen levels declining. In the UK, the average age for an individual to reach menopause is 51. An individual is officially described as post-menopausal when they have not had a period for 12 months.

The perimenopause is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause. This is the time when many individuals start to experience symptoms. The perimenopause can often last for four to five years, although for some people it may continue for many more years, or for others last just a few months. In general, periods usually start to become less frequent over this time. Sometimes menstrual cycles become shorter, periods may become heavier or lighter, or individuals may notice that the odd period is missed until eventually they stop altogether. Some people report that during the perimenopause they experience worse symptoms than the menopause.

Some individuals experience sudden menopause symptoms after surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or have a diagnosis of Primary Ovarian Insufficiency (POI).

It is estimated that around one in every 100 people will experience a premature menopause (before the age of 40).

The menopause affects every person differently and so there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to it.

Some people experience few symptoms while others experience such severe symptoms that it impacts negatively on both their home and working lives.

Signs and symptoms of the menopause

The following is merely a guide to some of the signs and symptoms that individuals may experience as part of the menopause. Some people may suffer with conditions that are exacerbated by the menopause, such as osteoarthritis and migraine.

Signs and symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate;
- Heavy and/or painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic;
- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome, sleep disturbance and fatigue;
- Mental health symptoms; low mood and feelings of depression or sadness, anger or irritability, anxiety and panic attacks, low self-esteem and loss of confidence;
- Memory loss, 'brain fog' and lack of concentration;

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- Urinary problems – more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal;
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort;
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness;
- Weight gain;
- Headaches and migraines;
- Menopausal hair loss;
- Loss of libido;
- Osteoporosis – the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone thinning disease osteoporosis;
- Side effects of hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some individuals (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

N.B. This is not an exhaustive list.

Many individuals may also find that their symptoms are connected. For example, sleep disturbance, which is really common during the menopause, may lead to a whole plethora of other serious conditions.

The length of time that people experience symptoms of the menopause can vary. Again, there is no one answer for all.

Symptoms can begin months or years before an individual's periods stop.

The perimenopause is usually expected to last around four or five years, but it can be much shorter or longer. During this time, many people begin to experience painful, intermittent and heavy periods. It is therefore important to raise this issue with management if adjustments need to be put in place, such as having access to a toilet and shower facilities (where possible).

According to the NHS, on average, an individual continues to experience symptoms for around four years after their last period, but around 10% of people continue to experience symptoms for up to 12 years after their last period and 3% will suffer for the rest of their lives.

It is also important to recognise that beyond the menopause, postmenopausal people can be at increased risk of certain conditions due to a decrease in hormones. These include osteoporosis and heart disease. The British Menopause Society (2016) estimated that 50% of people aged between 45-65 who had experienced the menopause in the previous ten years had NOT consulted a healthcare professional about their menopausal symptoms.

This was despite:

- 42% feeling that their symptoms were worse or much worse than they expected;
- 50% believed the menopause had impacted on their home life; and
- More than a third believed the menopause had impacted on their work life.

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Many workplace factors can make working life more difficult for those experiencing the menopause, which may make symptoms worse. Leaders should take into consideration the concerns listed below. These can include:

- lack of suitable gender sensitive risk assessments;
- lack of awareness of the menopause;
- lack of management training on health issues;
- poor ventilation and air quality;
- inadequate access to drinking water;
- inadequate or non-existent toilet/washing facilities;
- lack of control of temperature/light;
- lack of appropriate uniforms or personal protective equipment;
- inflexible working time rules/break times;
- inflexible policies which penalise people because of their symptoms;
- negative attitudes;
- excessive workloads;
- workplace stress;
- unsympathetic line management/colleagues; and
- bullying and harassment.

Line managers

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Line managers should seek to provide appropriate support and adjustments where possible to help employees deal with issues arising from the menopause.

Should an employee request a meeting to discuss concerns of the menopause, it is recommended that line managers adhere to the following:

- Arrange a meeting at a convenient time for both parties;
- Allow the employee to be accompanied if they want it. This can be a trade union representative or a colleague;
- Choose a venue that provides privacy and is unlikely to be disturbed;
- Allow adequate time to talk;
- Encourage the employee to be open and honest. It is difficult to help when you haven't got the full picture;
- If the employee wishes to speak to another manager, this should be allowed;
- Keep a note of all discussions and agree outcomes and next steps. Any agreed adjustments can be noted in the employee's Personal Adjustment Passport;
- Agree a follow-up meeting to review the situation.

Appendix 3 – Workplace issues and suggested adjustments

| Symptom | Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms | Suggested adjustments |
|--|---|--|
| Daytime sweats, hot flushes, palpitations | Lack of access to rest breaks or suitable break areas. Hot flushes and facial redness may cause individuals to feel self-conscious, or the sensation may affect concentration or train of thought. | <p>Be flexible about additional breaks where possible. Allow time out and access to fresh air.</p> <p>Be flexible with workplace dress codes where possible.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Ensure cover is available where possible so employees can leave their posts if needed.</p> |
| Nighttime sweats and hot flushes. Insomnia or sleep disturbance | Rigid start/finish times and lack of flexible working options may increase fatigue at work due to lack of sleep. | <p>Consider temporary adjustment of hours to accommodate any difficulties where possible.</p> <p>Allow flexible working where possible.</p> <p>Provide the option of alternative tasks/duties where possible.</p> <p>Make allowance for potential additional need for sickness absence.</p> <p>Reassure employees that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets.</p> |
| Urinary problems; for example, increased frequency, urgency, and increased risk of urinary infections | <p>Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and an increase in stress levels.</p> <p>Employee may need to access toilet facilities more frequently, may need to drink more fluids and may feel unwell.</p> | <p>Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom facilities.</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks during work to go to the toilet.</p> <p>Ensure easy access to supply of cold drinking water.</p> <p>Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day.</p> |

| Symptom | Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms | Suggested adjustments |
|--|---|---|
| | | Make allowances for potential additional need for sickness absence. |
| Irregular and/or heavy periods | <p>Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and an increase in stress levels.</p> <p>Employee may need to access toilet and washroom facilities more frequently.</p> | <p>Ensure easy access to well-maintained toilet and washroom or shower facilities (where possible).</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet/washroom.</p> <p>Ensure sanitary products readily available.</p> <p>Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day.</p> <p>Ensure cover is available where possible so employees can leave their posts if needed.</p> |
| Skin irritation, dryness or itching | <p>Unsuitable workplace temperatures and humidity may increase skin irritation, dryness and itching.</p> <p>There may be discomfort, an increased risk of infection and a reduction in the barrier function of skin.</p> | <p>Ensure comfortable working temperatures and humidity.</p> <p>Ensure easy access to well-maintained toilet and washroom or shower facilities (where possible).</p> |
| Muscular aches and bone and joint pains | Lifting and moving, as well as work involving repetitive movements or adopting static postures, may be more uncomfortable and there may be an increased risk of injury. | <p>Make any necessary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules/tasks and keep under review.</p> <p>Consider providing alternative lower-risk tasks where possible.</p> <p>Follow Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and advice on manual handling and preventing MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders).</p> |
| Headaches | Headaches may be triggered or worsened by many workplace factors such as artificial lighting, poor air quality, exposure to chemicals, screen work, workplace | Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality. |

| Symptom | Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms | Suggested adjustments |
|---|---|---|
| | stress, poor posture/ unsuitable workstations, unsuitable uniforms or workplace temperatures. | <p>Ensure access to natural light and ability to adjust artificial light.</p> <p>Allow additional rest breaks where possible.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Carry out Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and stress risk assessments</p> |
| Dry eyes | Unsuitable workplace temperatures/humidity, poor air quality and excessive screen work may increase dryness in the eyes, discomfort, eye strain and increase the risk of infection. | <p>Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality.</p> <p>Allow additional breaks from screen based work.</p> <p>Carry out DSE risk assessments.</p> |
| Psychological symptoms, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Anxiety • Panic attacks • Mood changes • Loss of confidence | <p>Excessive workloads, unsupportive management and colleagues, perceived stigma around the menopause, bullying and harassment and any form of work-related stress may exacerbate symptoms.</p> <p>Stress can have wide ranging negative effects on mental and physical health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Performance and workplace relationships may be affected.</p> | <p>Carry out a stress risk assessment and address work-related stress through implementation of the HSE's management standards.</p> <p>Ensure that employees will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload, tasks or performance management targets.</p> <p>Ensure that managers understand the menopause and are prepared to discuss any concerns that employees may have in a supportive manner.</p> <p>Ensure managers have a positive attitude and understand that they should offer adjustments to workload and tasks where possible.</p> <p>Allow flexible/home working where possible.</p> |

| Symptom | Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms | Suggested adjustments |
|---|---|---|
| | | <p>Make allowance for potential additional need for sickness absence.</p> <p>Ensure that employees are trained in mental health awareness.</p> <p>Raise general awareness of issues around the menopause so colleagues are more likely to be supportive.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to network with colleagues experiencing similar issues.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Provide access to Counselling services.</p> |
| <p>Psychological symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory problems • Difficulty concentrating | <p>Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily; for example, learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue), performance may be affected and work related stress may exacerbate these symptoms. Loss of confidence may result.</p> | <p>Carry out a stress risk assessment and address work-related stress through implementation of the HSE's management standards.</p> <p>Reassure employees that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets.</p> <p>Ensure that managers understand the menopause and are prepared to discuss any concerns that employees may have in a supportive manner.</p> <p>Ensure managers have a positive attitude and understand that they should offer adjustments to workload and tasks if possible.</p> <p>Reduce demands if workload identified as an issue.</p> <p>Provide additional time to complete tasks if needed or</p> |

| Symptom | Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms | Suggested adjustments |
|---------|--|---|
| | | <p>consider substituting with alternative tasks where possible.</p> <p>Allow flexible/home working where possible.</p> <p>Offer and facilitate alternative methods of communicating tasks and planning of work to assist memory.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Provide access to counselling services.</p> |