

Menopause Policy and Guidance

Policy Owner: The Mercian Trust
People & Culture Committee

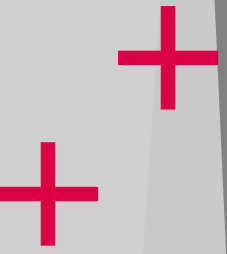
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Increasing Opportunities
Improving Outcomes



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1 Principle

- 1.1 The Trust recognises the importance of supporting our colleagues who experience menopausal symptoms and are committed to ensuring that appropriate adjustments and additional support is available to help colleagues feel comfortable at work.
- 1.2 The menopause is still very much viewed as a private matter and is rarely discussed openly. Many individuals also do not recognise that the symptoms they are experiencing could be due to the menopause.
- 1.3 We aim, as part of our desire to create an open, inclusive and understanding culture, to increase awareness of the menopause and the impact it has on individuals' lives.
- 1.4 This document includes information on the menopause, internal and external resources that can help support our colleagues and provides guidance to line managers on ways to support their people who may be experiencing symptoms.
- 1.5 This guidance does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2 What is the menopause?

- 2.1 The menopause is a natural health event for most women and some trans men, non-binary and intersex people, that usually takes place in-between 40 and 55 years of age (the average age in the UK is 51), during which they have not had a period for 12 months and experience hormonal changes. It can also happen earlier or later. For many people, symptoms usually last about four years, but in some cases can last longer, sometimes up to 12 years.
- 2.2 The menopause is preceded by the perimenopause, during which the body prepares itself for menopause. The perimenopause can also last several years and can involve similar symptoms to the menopause itself. For the purpose of this document, any reference to the menopause includes the perimenopause. The perimenopause is not the same as premature menopause.
- 2.3 Premature menopause is when an individual experiences menopause early, either naturally or through surgery or illness.
- 2.4 Post-menopause is the time after menopause. A person who is post-menopausal may still experience menopausal symptoms for years to come.
- 2.5 Many who experience menopausal symptoms will have mild symptoms, but for others, symptoms can be severe and can greatly impact their day to day lives. While symptoms vary and each person's experience will differ, they commonly include:
 - Hot flushes
 - Night sweats and difficulty sleeping
 - Anxiety and panic attacks
 - Dizziness
 - Fatigue
 - Memory loss
 - Depression

- Headaches/migraines
 - Dry eyes
 - Recurrent urinary tract infections
 - Joint stiffness, aches and pains
 - Reduced concentration and focus
 - Irregular and/or heavy periods
- 2.6 Three out of four people get symptoms, one in four troublesome enough to affect day to day life (NHS Employers, 2021). The physical and emotional impact of the menopause can be far reaching due to the symptoms outlined above and may have a significant impact in the workplace. For some individuals who are dealing with these symptoms, they may find their job more challenging which in turn may affect their wellbeing, confidence, and performance at work. It is important that the Trust work together to reduce the stigma around the menopause, increase our understanding and awareness of the topic and offer appropriate support while individuals go through this period in their lives.

3 Support for individuals

- 3.1 The Trust encourages an environment in which colleagues can, if they want, have open conversations about the menopause. We expect everyone to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by the menopause in the workplace.
- 3.2 Anyone affected by the menopause is encouraged to speak to their manager or HR department about their symptoms and the support they may need to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause them at work. Early notification, where possible, will also help managers to determine the best course of action to support an individual's needs.
- 3.3 While many who go through the menopause will be able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of menopausal symptoms on their work. If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your manager in the first instance.
- 3.4 Experiencing menopausal symptoms can be a sensitive and personal matter and as such, some individuals may not wish to discuss with their manager initially. In these circumstances, please speak in confidence to your Trust HR staff contactable via the email address hrmatters@merciantrust.org.uk or a trusted colleague instead.
- 3.5 Each situation will be dealt with on a case by case basis and support could take the form of:
- 3.5.1 A risk assessment undertaken upon request by the individual.
 - 3.5.2 Flexible working: The Trust recognises that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms, we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:
 - a change to the pattern of hours worked;
 - permission to perform work from home;

- a reduction in working hours; or
- more frequent breaks.

Employees should discuss such requests with their line manager/HR. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis. A copy of the Flexible Working Policy is available in our Trust's information Portal.

3.5.3 Temperature control: The Trust strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees. We will allow flexibility within our dress code where reasonable. There are windows or an air conditioning system in operation in the building, chilled water is provided on each floor, and desk fans will be provided upon request.

3.5.4 A referral to our occupational health providers to ensure that an individual's working environment is not making their menopausal symptoms worse and to inform us of any further adjustments that should be considered, especially in the instances where the menopause is causing significant sickness absence or where it is directly affecting performance.

3.6 We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those going through the menopause.

4 Internal support

- EAP - the Employee Assistance Programme details are available from your line manager or from hrmatters@merciantrust.org.uk they can provide confidential support network for practical advice and counselling.
- Occupational Health - provide impartial and confidential advice on fitness for work and the type of support required to ensure those experiencing mental ill health can remain in the workplace or successfully return to the workplace. For more information please contact hrmatters@merciantrust.org.uk.

5 External support (specialist agencies and charities)

- Menopause Matters - [Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)
- Manage My Menopause - [Manage My Menopause | Tailored menopausal advice provided by experts in post-reproductive health](#)
- The Daisy Network - [Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)
- Menopause Café - [Gather to eat cake, drink and discuss menopause \(menopausecafe.net\)](#)
- Henpicked - [Home - Henpicked](#)
- Balance - [Balance - Homepage \(balance-menopause.com\)](#)

6 How can you stay healthy during the menopause?

- 6.1 We encourage you to speak with your GP to determine if you are experiencing the menopause and to explore what treatment/medication may be suitable for you to help ease your symptoms. There are checklists available such as the Henpicked Colleague support pack which can help prepare you for these conversations.
- 6.2 There are also other ways to ensure you look after your physical health as you go through the changes that menopause brings:
- Eat a balanced diet
 - Refrain from smoking
 - Limit alcohol intake
 - Exercise regularly

7 Support for managers and colleagues

- 7.1 It is important that everyone within the Trust are aware of this guidance and understand the practical steps that can be taken to support a colleague who is experiencing the menopause.
- 7.2 What you should do:
- Make yourself and your team familiar with this document and our internal and external sources of support
 - Attend webinars or other training we provide on the menopause
 - Create an environment where individuals feel comfortable disclosing health issues i.e. make conversations about wellbeing standard in one-to-one meetings and try and raise awareness of the menopause generally in your team to help breakdown the stigma and embarrassment some people feel about the topic
 - Ensure you listen to the needs of each individual and be open to having discussions about the menopause, ensuring confidentiality where requested
 - You may find that an individual chooses not to initially discuss their symptoms with you, try not to take this to heart and remain open to a discussion when/if they feel ready to talk
 - Be aware that some individuals may seek to downplay symptoms, so encourage an open and honest discussion where appropriate
 - If an individual does inform you that they are suffering with menopausal symptoms, then work with them to ensure the right support is provided. The menopause and the symptoms associated with it, should be treated as a long-term health issue, if you are not sure about what options of support are available, speak with hrmatters@merciantrust.org.uk
 - Ensure that you check-in regularly with the individual to review the effectiveness of any support measures put in place and make any changes as necessary

- Treat all conversations about the menopause sensitively and handle all information disclosed confidentially and in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy/Workforce Privacy Notice.

7.3 What you shouldn't do:

- Make assumptions about the menopause and how this may be affecting the individual
- Shy away from talking about the menopause
- Share personal information that has been disclosed to you without consent
- Provide medical or personal advice where it is not wanted
- Try to refrain from making decisions for the individual; instead signpost relevant help and agree together how to move forward

7.4 Example questions to ask:

- 'What symptoms are you experiencing?'
- How are these symptoms affecting you day to day/at work?
- What are you already doing to try and manage this?
- What other ways can we help you at work in managing these symptoms?

8 Data protection

- 8.1 The Trust will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy and Workforce Privacy Notice. Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.