

Version	V1
Last Revision Date	March 2019



Menopause Guide

This document is available in Welsh or English and other formats are available when requested.



DOCUMENT CONTROL	
POLICY NAME	Menopause Guide
Department	Human Resources
Telephone Number	01443 444531
Initial Policy Launch Date	March 2019
Reviewing Officer	Melanie Warburton
Review Date	March 2019
Date of Equality Impact Assessment	February 2019
REVISION HISTORY	
Date	Revised By
DOCUMENT APPROVAL	
This document has received approval from:	Date of Approval
HR Senior Management Team	February 2019
Corporate Management Team	Not required
Cabinet	Not required

1. Introduction

The Council recognises that female, trans and non-binary employees may need support during the menopause, particularly as it is not a widely discussed subject and can be misunderstood. Around 1 in 3 women has either experienced or is currently going through the menopause¹. This guidance aims to raise awareness and understanding about the menopause amongst all employees.

The Council has a positive attitude to the menopause and aims to create a working environment where employees feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all employees are treated fairly and is mindful that some symptoms of the menopause may meet the definition of 'impairment' under the Equality Act (2010).

In addition, the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health and safety of all employees. The Line Manager may need to consider undertaking a risk assessment under the Management Regulations in the event that the working environment is perceived to have a negative impact on an employee who is experiencing symptoms of the menopause. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments which may be reasonably required.

2. The Menopause

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for women, and for trans and non-binary employees who were assigned female at birth. It refers to the time when menstruation has ceased for 12 consecutive months. This occurs usually between the ages of 48 and 55. Overall, this period of hormonal change and associated symptoms can last from 4 to 8 years. When menopause occurs before the age of 40, it is considered early. Early menopause can be caused by medical treatments, or it can just happen on its own.

The menopause occurs in all people born female and begins when the ovaries spontaneously fail to produce the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. The resulting low and changing levels of hormones, particularly oestrogen, are thought to be the cause of menopausal symptoms.

Menopause is not an illness however some of the symptoms associated with the menopause include hot flushes, heavy periods, urinary problems, palpitations, night sweats and sleep disturbance, fatigue, poor concentration, poor memory, irritability, mood disturbance, skin irritation, anxiety attacks, aches, pains and dryness of the skin and eyes. Not every person will experience all of these symptoms and they may not occur continuously.

Hormonal changes associated with the menopause can affect a person's future health as well as their experience of menopausal symptoms. Some people require medical advice and treatment such as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Seeking medical advice about menopause related symptoms may mean time off work for medical appointments and/or treatment. HRT can benefit some people (e.g. by helping to reduce risks of osteoporosis in high risk groups). HRT is not suitable for everyone – medical advice and supervision is essential.

1. Wales TUC – The menopause in the workplace

Normally, the menopause is a natural process involving gradual change, but it can be sudden and acute if it results from medical intervention – for example, hysterectomy or certain cancer treatments. People who have sudden menopause following serious illness or surgery tend to experience more severe problems than others, and may require treatment and/or post-operative care afterwards to prevent further problems.

Employees experiencing the menopause may encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms. Some may find themselves feeling less confident as a result of significant and embarrassing symptoms. Tiredness and night sweats can make employees more susceptible to fatigue and stress at work.

Employees experiencing menopausal symptoms can be affected in different ways but workplace factors that can make working life difficult for colleague's experiencing the menopause include:

- Lack of suitable risk assessments;
- Lack of awareness of the menopause;
- Poor ventilation and air quality;
- Inadequate access to drinking water;
- Inadequate toilet access and inflexible break times;
- Negative attitudes;
- Unsympathetic line management/colleagues.

3. Accessing Support

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different levels of support may be needed. As with all longstanding health related conditions the Council is aware that sympathetic and appropriate support is required from line management to help employees deal with the issues arising from the menopause.

Employees may feel uncomfortable going to their Line Manager if they are experiencing problems due to the taboo that still surrounds the menopause. There are other options available such as approaching the Equality and Diversity Team or Human Resources or seeking advice from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit.

The Council is committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make symptoms worse. Temporary workplace adjustments may be necessary to support colleagues who are experiencing the menopause. The following points should be considered depending on the employee's symptoms:

1. A risk assessment should be undertaken in order to consider the particular requirements of menopausal colleagues and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments which may be required.
2. Where possible, working time arrangements should be flexible enough to ensure they meet the needs of menopausal colleagues, who may at times require access to more flexible working in order to deal with their symptoms, including starting later after difficulties sleeping, needing to leave work suddenly or take more breaks during the day.

3. Consideration should be given to environmental factors. Issues that have been highlighted as useful among the general working population include temperature and ventilation controls, such as the use of fans. Office seating plans could also be reviewed to enable the employee to sit near the window in order for the employee to adjust the temperature of the room accordingly.
4. Consideration should be given regarding access to chilled drinking water and access to adequate workplace sanitary facilities.
5. Uniform may exacerbate symptoms in terms of hot flushes and sweating therefore where possible, flexibility may be required to enable employees to cope with these symptoms.
6. Adjustments may be required to the employee's duties as hot flushes can be more difficult to cope with when undertaking high visibility work such as formal presentations and formal meetings for example.

4. **Self Help**

Current health promotion advice highlights the importance of lifestyle choices before, during and after the menopause and the benefits of:

- consulting with their GP on management of the menopause and to ensure that any symptoms are not due to any other causes
- obtaining support and discussing their symptoms with their manager
- obtaining a referral to our Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit about their symptoms in order to obtain advice and support about workplace adjustments
- eating healthily – research has shown that a balanced diet can help alleviate some symptoms
- eating regularly – to avoid fluctuations in blood sugar levels
- wearing natural fibres – to allow the body to control its temperature
- regular exercise – to manage weight and wellbeing
- drinking plenty of water
- giving up smoking
- ensuring alcohol intake is at, or below, recommended levels
- having access to natural light
- getting adequate rest and relaxation.

These suggestions can help with some symptoms of the menopause and may also help reduce the risks of osteoporosis (brittle bones), diabetes and heart disease in later life.

5. **Further Information and Support**

More information on the menopause is available from the following:

- Healthtalk.org
<http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/late-life/menopause/topics>
- Menopause matters
www.menopausematters.co.uk
- Menopause Support UK
www.menopausesupport.co.uk
- NHS information on HRT
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hormone-replacement-therapy-hrt/>
- NHS Menopause pages
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- The British Menopause Society
www.thebms.org.uk
- Women's Health Concerns
<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/>

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR AN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCING MENOPAUSE

LOCATION:

ASSESSOR(S):

EMPLOYEE:

DESIGNATION: LINE MANAGER

LINE MANAGER:

DATE: 01/01/2019

REVIEW DATE: 01/04/2019

HAZARD	IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE	CURRENT CONTROLS	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED
Workstations and Working Environment	Workstations or the working environment may be unsuitable for employees and cause postural and / or psychological issues.	<p>Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Policy in place and available, together with supporting guidance, on the RCT Source.</p> <p>Work is arranged to ensure natural breaks away from the DSE occur.</p> <p>Suitable lighting is present in all workplaces.</p>	<p>If not already completed, undertake a DSE assessment and determine if any reasonable adjustments are required.</p> <p>Ensure the employee is taking regular breaks from their workstation.</p> <p>As each individual has different comfort levels, consult employee on lighting levels, and where appropriate make reasonable adjustments (for example, provide local spot lighting, adjust fixed ceiling lights etc.)</p>

HAZARD	IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE	CURRENT CONTROLS	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED
Temperature	<p>Each employee will have a different optimal temperature.</p> <p>In addition, whilst experiencing menopausal symptoms, the employee's temperature may fluctuate.</p>	<p>Workplaces are provided with suitable heating and ventilation and reasonable temperatures are maintained.</p> <p>Some work locations are provided with air conditioning.</p> <p>Desk fans are provided where appropriate.</p> <p>Most work locations have windows that open.</p>	<p>Monitor workplace temperature to ensure a reasonable level for most employees.</p> <p>As each individual has different comfort levels, consult employee on thermal comfort, and where appropriate make reasonable adjustments (for example, move away from radiator, move to air conditioned part of building, review PPE / uniform standards etc.)</p>
Welfare Facilities	<p>Toilets may not be easily accessible causing distress, an increase in the risk of infection and embarrassment.</p> <p>Private washing and changing facilities may not be available causing distress and embarrassment.</p> <p>Drinking water may not be readily available which may cause dehydration.</p>	<p>Toilets are readily available, including access to sanitary bins.</p> <p>Some workplaces have private washing and changing facilities.</p> <p>Drinking water is readily available in all Council workplaces.</p>	<p>Ensure toilets remain easily available and where possible provide private washing and changing facilities.</p> <p>Where appropriate, consider whether a change of work location to one with private facilities is reasonable.</p> <p>Ensure the water supply is available and report any issues to the Building Manager.</p>

HAZARD	IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE	CURRENT CONTROLS	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED
Psychological Symptoms	Employee may suffer from aches, pains, dizziness, headaches, lack of energy, may become lethargic etc.	The employee's manager is aware of the potential symptoms of the menopause process and will provide support during the course of the process.	Provide all employees with information relating to the menopause so they can recognise and understand symptoms, and offer support.
Stress	Employee may suffer from mood swings, irritability, loss of concentration etc.	<p>The employee's manager is aware of the potential symptoms of the menopause and has an understanding of the employee's potential change in behaviour/attitude during the course of the process.</p> <p>There is a Stress at Work Policy in place which is available on the RCT Source.</p> <p>There are other support mechanisms in place such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Meetings • Supervision/one-to-one sessions • Occupation Health and Wellbeing Unit • Trade Union Support 	<p>Provide all employees with information relating to the menopause so they can recognise symptoms and show empathy towards colleagues who may be experiencing the process.</p> <p>Using forms and guidance available on the RCT Source, complete a workplace stress risk assessment for the employee and implement any actions required.</p> <p>Ensure the employee is aware of the support mechanisms available and can discuss any concerns confidentially if required.</p>

HAZARD	IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE	CURRENT CONTROLS	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED
Manual Handling	<p>Lifting and carrying, 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> <p>Employees who have been through the menopause are at an increased risk of developing osteoporosis (weak bones) as a result of the lower level of oestrogen in the body.</p>	<p>Manual handling aids are available to assist with moving / carrying loads.</p> <p>Windows are provided in most work locations which allows natural sunlight in to trigger the production of Vitamin D which in turn, helps strengthen the bones.</p>	<p>Ensure assessments of all unavoidable manual handling tasks are completed.*</p> <p>Discuss work processes with employee to identify any concerns around repetitive movements and / or static postures.</p> <p>Ensure the employee is taking regular breaks away from their desk.</p> <p>* the HSE Manual Handling Assessment Charts (MAC) tool may be used.</p>

NOTES

1. The line manager must inform the employee of their duty to report any concerns they may have over their health, workstation, workplace in general, work pattern etc. so that management can address any such issues.
2. A copy of this risk assessment is to be given to the employee for their information, and a copy is to be kept on the employee's personal file.
3. The employee's line manager is responsible for ensuring any actions identified are suitably implemented.

1. Wales TUC – The menopause in the workplace