

The Auriga Academy Trust

Managing Menopause at Work Policy

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Please note that all Trust policies are reviewed regularly. Should you have any queries regarding this policy, note an omission or wish to propose an amendment, please email HR@aurigaacademytrust.org.uk.

1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

The recognised trade unions have been consulted.

2. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Raise awareness of the menopause and associated symptoms
- Set out the support measures for those experiencing the menopause symptoms at work
- Create an environment whereby affected employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms
- Form part of the school's commitment to Health & Safety within the workplace and to ensure employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

3. What is the Menopause

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and others who have a menstrual cycle including:

- Trans persons – “trans” is an umbrella term used to describe persons whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
- Persons with “variations of sex development” (VSD) – some persons might prefer to identify as intersex or use the term “differences in sex development” (DSD)
- Persons who are non-binary.

The menopause usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age but it can also happen earlier or later in life. In the UK the average age of menopause is 51. For many, symptoms last about four years, but in some cases symptoms can last a lot longer.

There are three different stages to the menopause:

- Peri-menopause – this is the lead up to the menopause when many women may experience symptoms
- Menopause – this is when a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to conceive
- Post-menopause – this is when a woman's periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months.

Additionally, some may experience the menopause before the age of 40, known as “premature menopause” or “premature ovarian insufficiency”.

Throughout the three menopausal stages, the individual can present with a number of different and often debilitating physical or psychological symptoms, including:

- Insomnia and night sweats
- Hot flushes and dizziness
- Palpitations and breathlessness
- Irregular periods and heavy bleeding
- Painful menstrual cramps
- Weight gain and slowed metabolism
- Thinning hair and menopausal hair loss
- Skin irritation, dryness, and itching
- Dry eyes and discomfort
- Vaginal dryness, itching, and discomfort
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint and muscular aches and stiffness
- Headaches and migraines

- Low energy levels and fatigue
- Low mood and irritability
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Reduced concentration and memory loss
- Increased emotional sensitivity and loss of confidence.

Stages and symptoms of the menopause can vary from person to person, and range from very mild to severe, as can the length of time over which these symptoms are experienced. These symptoms can begin months or even years before an individual's menstrual cycles stop, and persist for several years after their last period.

It should be remembered that this can also be a time of life when women are experiencing difficulties, not least with increasing caring responsibilities, and the onset of other age-related health conditions.

4. Managing Menopause in the Workplace

Employers should ensure they have steps, procedures and support in place to help staff affected by the menopause. Having regular conversations with staff and listening to their concerns might help resolve issues early on with minimal impact on duties at work.

4.1 Complying with Legislation

When dealing with issues concerning the menopause, employers should be mindful of the related areas of law which may be engaged such as the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#), which says an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare at work. Whilst the menopause is not a specific 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act 2010, if an employee is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could amount to discrimination if it relates to one of the protected characteristics, for example:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment.

4.2 Supportive Measures

It is important for employers to be aware that the menopause and its symptoms can affect staff at any time. The menopause can also have an impact on those supporting someone going through the menopause, for example a relative, partner, colleague or carer. Supporting and creating a positive and open environment between an employer and someone affected by the menopause can help prevent the person from

- Losing confidence in their skills and abilities
- Feeling like they need to take time off work and hide the reasons for it
- Having increased mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression
- Leaving their job.

Failing to recognise and provide the relevant support could result in:

- Poor employee engagement and low morale
- Reduced performance and lost productivity
- High rates of sickness-related or even unauthorised absenteeism
- Poor working relationships and conflict at work
- A damaged employer-employee relationship
- Loss of valuable members of staff who may leave.

Employers should explore the possible adjustments which can be made to assist staff who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause, and to ensure they can continue to do their job confidently and effectively. The adjustments can include for example:

- Adequate ventilation/positioning near a door or window

- Easy access to toilet facilities
- Access to private/designated areas to rest/recover and/or take medication
- Signposting to specialist organisations providing support
- Flexibility and increased frequency in breaks if required
- Making allowances for sickness absence under the Managing Attendance Policy.

Where symptoms are severe, consider undertaking a risk assessment and/or referring the member of staff to Occupational Health to ascertain whether the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms and what reasonable adjustments would accommodate them in carrying out their duties.

Providing appropriate training to line managers to promote a culture of openness about the menopause as well as other workplace health issues. Those responsible for delivering the training and/or line managers should be properly attuned to menopausal symptoms and aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can provide support in a sensitive and constructive manner.

Organising conversations with staff - individual conversations with staff affected by the menopause should always be confidential and held in private where both the manager and staff member are comfortable and will not be disturbed. The manager should:

- allow the individual to decide how much information they wish to disclose in the meeting
- ask general questions, but let the individual lead the conversation
- not ask them if they want to talk about the menopause, or suggest what symptoms they might be experiencing
- not make any assumptions about the individual's symptoms and should consider any needs they have.

Managers should respect the individual's wishes for privacy and not disclose any information to other colleagues without their permission. If the individual wants information about their menopause symptoms to be shared, the manager should let them decide:

- what they want and do not want their colleagues to know
- who will be told and who will do the telling

Keep a written record of what has been agreed about confidentiality and the sharing of information.

It is important to note that individuals might not talk about their menopause symptoms at work because they:

- feel it's a private or personal matter
- feel their symptoms might be embarrassing to share with others
- do not know their line manager well enough
- are not sure if their line manager will be sympathetic
- feel they will not be taken seriously
- are worried about confidentiality
- think they will be seen to be less able to do their job
- are worried that job security or promotion opportunities might be taken away
- are worried about outing themselves as transgender, or someone with variations of sex development (VSD) or non-binary.

If individuals affected by the menopause want to, employers should give them the option of talking with someone other than their manager. This would help individuals who might not be comfortable with approaching their line manager in the first instance to talk about how the menopause is affecting them.

The employer should make sure this person has all the necessary knowledge and training to deal with conversations about the menopause. They could be, for example a:

- member of the Trust HR team
- trade union representative (if the person is a trade union member)
- counsellor from the organisation's employee assistance programme (EAP)
- wellbeing champion

Managers should be involved in agreeing any changes, even if the individual has an initial conversation with someone else.

4.3 Treatment Options

Individuals affected may not need any assistance with the menopause and they can go through this natural stage with no requirement for medical interventions. For those who may require interventions they may find a number of treatment options available which they can explore further with their GP. These include:

- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
- Alternative medications like anti-depressants
- Natural treatments
- Changing to a healthier lifestyle (diet and exercise).

The employer can also refer the individual to the Employee Assistance Programme if appropriate.

4.4 Sickness Absence

When a staff member is off sick because of the menopause, the employer should record these absences separately from other absences.

Trust HR will seek advice from The Schools HR Co-operative where such absences have contributed towards a Managing Attendance Meeting.

5. Further Sources of Information and Support

Please note: This section contains links to external third-party websites. The Trust is not responsible for these external websites or the content of them, and we do not accept responsibility or liability in respect of the content of these third-party websites

- [TUC – Guidance on the menopause](#)
- [Acas – Guidance on Menopause at Work](#)
- [NHS – Menopause information](#)
- [British Menopause Society](#)
- [Menopause Matters](#)
- [The Daisy Network](#)
- [CIPD](#)
- World Menopause Day – 18 October.