



Staff Menopause Policy

We actively promote democracy, the rule of the law, individual liberty and respect those with different faiths and beliefs. These are fundamental British Values which underpin all that we offer, as does our School Motto 'Not for oneself but for all.

St Hilary's School strives to ensure that staff are supported and encouraged to develop personally and professionally. We recognise that staff health and wellbeing is important to pupil achievement and the school's performance. St Hilary's School is committed to making sure that this Policy is implemented, in maintaining a school ethos which supports staff health and wellbeing, during the menopause, by making sure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently and that adjustments are made where possible, to the working day and schedule. This policy focuses on menopause which is a natural part of every woman's life. Although this policy references the female menopause, any male members of staff who are experiencing the symptoms of andropause (male menopause) will be treated with the same sensitivities contained in this policy. Trans and non-binary employees may also experience the menopause and are covered by this policy.

Overview

Hormonal changes can affect woman at various times in their life including when they are pregnant, having fertility treatment, under-going gender transitioning, receiving hormone treatment and during the menopause. Hormonal changes can bring symptoms which manifest both physical and psychologically.

The menopause is when a woman's oestrogen levels decline and she stops having periods (for 12 consecutive months). This typically is around the age of 50 years old but may also occur earlier or later. The Perimenopause refers to the phase leading up to menopause, when changing levels of hormones lead to menopausal symptoms. This usually starts in a woman's mid to late forties but may be earlier.

Premature menopause occurs when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen when a woman's ovaries stop making normal levels of reproductive hormones including oestrogen or because of certain medical treatments including some cancer treatments.

St Hilary's recognises that going through the peri menopause and the menopause is not always an easy transition. Symptoms can have a significant effect on a woman's comfort and feelings of wellbeing including how she feels in work and how she feels about her work. We realise that with the right support, it can be much better. Not everyone will have symptoms, but we aim to support those that do to improve their experience and wellbeing at work.

Note:

This policy should be read alongside other School policies which support an inclusive and supportive working environment both in work and when working from home. Those policies include the Data Protection Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing in School and the Staff Handbook.

This policy sets out the guidelines for our staff and the Leadership Team. It does not form part of an employee's employment contract, and we may update the policy as necessary and / or at the point of the annual review of all policies.

1. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Foster an environment in which our staff can openly and comfortably start and engage in conversations about the menopause.
- Ensure everyone understands what the menopause is and are clear about our policies and practices.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and how they can support women at work.
- Ensure that those suffering from menopausal symptoms feel confident to discuss these and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments they need to continue to work effectively.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

We aim to create an environment in which all of our employees feel informed about the menopause and are comfortable and confident talking about its impact on their physical and mental health. We want everyone to understand what the menopause is and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. We recognise that this is not just an issue for women and aim to raise awareness of it with our male colleagues as well.

2. What are the menopause symptoms?

The menopause produces a range of physical and psychological symptoms that can affect many aspects of life, all related to the changes in hormone balance. Each person is different and not all will be affected in the same way or to the same extent.

Common symptoms include:

- Hot flushes
- Headaches
- Poor concentration
- Dry eyes
- Anxiety
- Low mood
- Lack of confidence
- Panic attacks
- Poor Sleep
- Weight gain
- Fatigue
- Poor memory
- Joint and muscle pain

On average, menopause symptoms last around four years but can last as long as 10 years. All women are different. Some will experience symptoms over a relatively short period; others may experience symptoms for many years. Women can also experience different symptoms at different times during this transition.

3. Understanding the menopause

Despite its potentially serious impact on a woman's everyday life, the menopause is still not spoken about as freely as some other physical or mental health issues. We aim to do things differently so that the menopause becomes a normal part of the health and wellbeing conversation with our staff.

Through increasing understanding and raising awareness of the symptoms and related issues, we aim to promote an organisation wide understanding of what the menopause means for those going through it. This is essential in building a culture of openness, trust, sensitivity and respect around what is, for many women, a challenging time in their lives.

We may need to make certain things easier for women going through it, to ease their symptoms or to help them to manage them. Some small adjustments can make a big impact in helping women carry out their daily

role, feel supported in work and feel comfortable in the work environment. In doing this, we hope to have discussions and put arrangements in place which is part of our inclusive work culture.

We may not be able to tell staff about any menopause related issues that a particular colleague is experiencing as we view this as confidential medical information.

For managers, recognising the symptoms of the menopause is vital to treating an affected employee fairly. It can explain certain behaviours that may not normally be displayed by an individual which are affecting their conduct, performance or attendance at work.

If you think that someone who reports to you may be going through the menopause and it is affecting their performance, and you're not sure what to do, please contact either Jane Whittingham, Gemma Mitchell or Jackie Trew.

4. Helping Staff through the menopause

If you are going through the menopause and are finding things difficult at work, please do not suffer in silence. We know that the menopause is a very personal matter, so we will not usually raise it with a member of staff even if we think they are displaying symptoms. We might ask how the member of staff is, in general terms, and encourage them to be open with us. They can then decide whether to talk to us about the menopause or not. We would encourage staff to do so that we can support them as much as possible.

We have included links to organisations that provide useful information about the menopause at the end of this policy and recommend that you access these if you need more information.

We have a four-step procedure that applies to discussions around the menopause and the action we will take:

Step 1

Talking to their GP or medical specialist about their menopause related concerns or symptoms maybe a good place for the staff member to start as it will hopefully help them access information about the menopause and inform our conversations with them about the impact on the workplace.

Step 2

Meet with a member of SLT or Jackie Trew. Staff can expect to have a private, honest and constructive conversation.

The staff member will have the opportunity to discuss ideas that could make things easier for them. Adjustments will depend on the symptoms experienced and, if relevant, the budget we have available. Things that some women may find helpful include:

Hot Flashes

- Controlling the temperature of your work area, such as providing a desktop fan, moving near a window or away from a heat source
- Providing easy access to drinking water
- Modifying our dress code
- Having access to a rest room for breaks if your work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if you need to manage a severe hot flush

Heavy Periods

- Try to ensure that toilets are easily accessible
- Providing access to sanitary products in toilets
- Making sure that there is somewhere that spare clothing can be stored

Headaches

- Providing easy access to drinking water

- Providing a quiet space
- Provide paracetamol on request from the Lead first Aider

Low Mood

- Agreeing time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission
- Having access to a quiet area

Loss of Confidence

- Having regular protected time to discuss concerns

Poor Concentration

- Adjusting work patterns
- Reviewing task allocation and workload
- Providing quiet spaces to work
- Reducing interruptions
- Agreeing protected time

Panic Attacks and Anxiety

- To suggest different ways in which to receive support
- Agreeing to have time away from work to undertake relaxation techniques or going for a walk

Please note, we have included these adjustments as suggestions only and realise that the menopause affects people in different ways. We will consider each case individually and are happy to discuss other adjustments as necessary.

We may need to discuss issues and possible solutions with other professionals including Occupational Health, particularly if adjustments do not appear to be working or advice is needed on what is most appropriate for the staff member.

We will work hard to balance individual needs with those of other colleagues. However, on occasions we may not be able to find a solution that works for everyone. We will not talk to other colleagues about the menopause related difficulties a member of staff may be having, unless they ask us to do so, or they give us permission to do so. We will keep notes of any discussions and will comply with our data protection responsibilities in respect of the information that passes between us, in line with our Data Protection Policy.

After initial discussions, we may carry out a health and safety risk assessment and/or seek advice from occupational health or other medical professionals.

Step 3

Taking account of any specialist advice, we will agree adjustments that we will make, with the member of staff. We will meet with the member of staff to make sure that the adjustments are working for them and for us. If any modifications are needed, or if anything new needs to be put in place, further discussions will take place.

Step 4

We will regularly meet with the member of staff to check that their symptoms are being managed effectively. The regularity of these meetings will depend on each individual need. The symptoms may change over time and if the adjustments are not working as well as the staff member had hoped, further meetings can be requested and the adjustments reviewed accordingly. We may need to consult with occupational health at various points to ensure everything is being done that should be done.

Other sources of support

Employees may also benefit from discussing their symptoms with a trusted colleague and may find the following resources useful.

1. The [NHS website](#) has some good, basic information about the menopause
2. [The British Menopause Society](#)
3. [Women's Health Concern](#)
4. [The Daisy Network](#) (For women experiencing premature menopause or ovarian insufficiency)

There is also a free app called the Balance App which can help to manage and track symptoms, access personalised expert advice and obtain support.

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