

# Menopause Policy

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Related Policies:

Employee Wellbeing and Attendance Management Policy (W22)  
The Risk Assessment Policy (HS11)

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## 1 Policy on a Page

The Trust has an important role to play in supporting the Health and Wellbeing of our employees.

The Trust recognises that Menopause is a natural process for women and we are committed to supporting all staff affected by Menopause including all gender identities. Effective and supportive management and early supportive interventions are essential to support employees when they are not fit for work and assisting them to return to work successfully. We also know that patients receive better care from employees who are fit and well.

This Policy sets out key responsibilities for all parties in a clear, fair and consistent process to enable supportive management of sickness absence across the Trust.

- The Policy is for all Trust staff including Medical and Dental staff.

For employees:

- Take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and where necessary seek support from their GP, line manager or other appropriate support.
- Attend and engage with Occupational Health and other related appointments to enable their manager to support them.

For Managers:

- Support and manage employees in line with the process set out in this policy.
- Consider early interventions to support employees when they are absent from work. Be open to exploring adjustments, new ways of working and to supporting employees to stay in work or return to work when they can.

## 2 Introduction

- The Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust is committed to providing an open, safe and healthy environment for all staff regardless of their stage in life.
- Menopause is a natural process which needs to be normalised, acknowledged, and accepted across society and the Trust. For many women it can be positively managed through lifestyle adjustments. However, the Trust recognises that for some, Menopause is not always an easy transition. Some women may need additional considerations to support and improve their experience at work, therefore it is important to use a flexible approach.
- The Trust is committed to supporting women who are affected in any way by Menopause and to support and inform managers so that employees reporting issues are treated fairly and given appropriate support.
- This policy has been created in partnership with trade unions as a commitment to maximise wellbeing for women at work who experience Menopause.
- The policy is inclusive of all gender identities.

## 3 Overview and Scope

- This policy relates to the Trust values in the following ways:

Partnering	Is supportive of others and encourages them to achieve their potential and look after their own wellbeing with appropriate support.
Ambitious	Focuses on solutions rather than problems, to give the best experience at work for our staff
Caring	Demonstrates how we will care for our employees who in turn care for our patients
Trusted	Recognises and values employees for the work that they do and their contribution.

The Policy applies to all employees of the Trust. It includes permanent and fixed-term employees, members of staff on bank contracts, those on work experience or training placements.

## 4 Definitions

*Menopause* – is defined as a biological stage experienced when a woman's hormones change and eventually their periods stop. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when they have not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for those reaching Menopause naturally). The average Menopause age is 51, however it can be earlier naturally or due to surgery, illness, or other reasons.

*Premature Menopause* is where Menopause happens before the age of 40 and can occur for

1 in 100 individuals. Often no cause is found but it can also happen due to surgery or some cancer treatments.

*PeriMenopause* is the time leading up to Menopause when a woman may experience changes and a wide range of menopausal symptoms. Ovulation cycles and periods can be irregular, continuing until 12 months after the final period. PeriMenopause can begin a number of years before Menopause itself.

*Post-Menopause* is the time after Menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months and for the rest of their life.

**When we talk about Menopause in this Policy, we are referring to any of these stages.**

*Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)*, hormone replacement therapy is medication (prescribed by a GP or hospital doctor) that contains hormones to replace those lost during Menopause. This may be either be Oestrogen alone or combined with another hormone called Progesterone and Testosterone, depending on the needs of the individual.

## **5 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **5.1 Employee**

- Should make themselves aware of the policy and help support colleagues going through Menopause.
- Take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and seek out support for Menopause [Menopause - A Guide for Managers and Staff by The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust - Issuu](#)
- To consent to a referral to Occupational Health where required.
- Be willing to engage in an open conversation with their manager. If for any reason they feel unable to speak to their manager they can also speak to (line manager's manager, Occupational Health, Trade Union/Professional Representative, Menopause Advocate or People Services, of the same sex or their GP)
- Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment and adhere to confidentiality with respect to Data Protection (2018).
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving because of their menopausal symptoms.
- See appendix 1 as a guide to record a summary of the discussion and any agreed actions or adjustments if you wish, and review where appropriate. See also appendix D of The Risk Assessment Policy (HS11)

### **5.2 Line Manager**

- Be aware of the content of this policy and use it to support employees who may have concerns, or are experiencing menopausal symptoms.
- The Trust has a Menopause Toolkit that provides guidance for both the employee and their line manager. [Menopause - A Guide for Managers and Staff by The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust - Issuu](#)
- It is expected that line managers will consider all reasonable adjustments to support employees to support them in the workplace.
- Management discussions with their employees will be open, sensitive and

recognise that everyone's experience of Menopause may differ. See appendix 1 as a guide for the employee to record a summary of the discussion and any agreed actions or adjustments, and review where appropriate. See also appendix D of The Risk Assessment Policy (HS11)

- Referral to occupational health where appropriate.
- Adhere to confidentiality with respect to Data Protection (2018).

### **5.3 People Services/Human Resources**

- To signpost managers to advice, in the support of Menopause affecting employees in the workplace and promoting positive health and wellbeing.
- To provide support and guidance on the implementation of this policy and ensure consistency of approach across the Trust.
- Monitor the application of this policy, adhere to relevant legislation and update the policy as required.

### **5.4 Occupational Health and Wellbeing Team**

- To signpost and advise in the management of Menopause affecting employees in the workplace and promoting positive health and wellbeing.

## **6 Understanding Menopause**

- What are the symptoms of Menopause?

The body can be affected by Menopause in numerous ways, causing a myriad of symptoms, some of which can affect performance at work. The list below shows some of the symptoms that can be experienced but is not exhaustive:

- Change in normal pattern of your periods
- Changes to your mood
- Problems with memory and concentration
- Hot flushes
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Palpitations
- Headaches and Migraines
- Muscle Aches and Joint Pains
- Changed body shape and weight gain
- Skin changes, dry and itchy skin
- Reduced sex drive
- Vaginal dryness and pain, itching or discomfort during sex
- Recurrent UTI's
- Sensitive teeth, painful gums or other mouth problems

Our Menopause Toolkit provides symptoms guidance from page 6 and a symptoms check list on page 16 ([Menopause - A Guide for Managers and Staff by The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust - Issuu](#))

## **7 Menopause and The Law**

While Menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, in accordance with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), “if an employee is disadvantaged and treated less favorably in any way because of their Menopause symptoms this could be viewed as discrimination if related to a protected characteristic”.

The following legislation is key to note:

**Equality Act 2010:** legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

**Health and safety at Work Act 1974:** which states, “An employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure everyone’s health, safety and welfare at work”.

Under the Equality Act 2010 workers are protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of protected characteristics including disability, age and sex. If Menopause symptoms have a long term and substantial impact on a woman’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, these symptoms could be considered a disability. If Menopause symptoms amount to a disability, an employer will be under a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments.

Women experiencing Menopause symptoms may also be protected from direct and indirect discrimination as well as harassment and victimisation, on the grounds of age and sex.

Under health and safety legislation, employers also have a legal obligation to conduct an assessment of their workplace risks.

## **8 The Working Environment**

The working environment may inadvertently exacerbate menopausal symptoms and increase discomfort at work. It is also important to consider the culture which includes the values and behaviors of the workplace as well as the physical space. Working in a team which demonstrates respect and consideration can mitigate the potential for negative experiences during Menopause such as physical or emotional issues.

The main types of workplace related issues are due to:

- High workplace temperatures, humidity.
- Poor ventilation.
- Perceived overcrowding and noise; no access to a quiet or restful space.
- Problems with accessing rest or toilet facilities.
- Lack of access to drinking water.
- Dryness and lack of natural light.

Line managers need to consider the working environment and explore what simple, practical steps could be taken to ensure the workplace is comfortable and promotes an inclusive and supportive culture.



Symptom	Potential Impact on Work	Adjustments for you and your Line Manager to consider
Daytime sweats and hot flushes	Less tolerant of workplace temperatures; work wear / uniform may become uncomfortable; personal protective equipment (PPE), for example, face masks/ visors and lead aprons may be uncomfortable if worn for long periods.	<p>Ensure easy access a to supply of cold drinking water. Ensure easy access to washroom facilities.</p> <p>Consider alternatives to hosiery or Trust uniforms if available.</p> <p>Look at ways to cool the working environment for staff affected, for example, fans at workstations; move desks to near windows/ open windows and adjust air conditioning.</p> <p>Take account of mobile workers' (porters, community, people working between sites etc) schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day.</p> <p>Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) if appropriate</p>
Night time sweats and flushes	Fatigue at work due to lack of sleep.	<p>Provide support and advice on sleep.</p> <p>Consider temporary adjustment of work patterns to accommodate any difficulties if possible within service requirements.</p> <p>Consider flexible working options.</p> <p>Consideration when managing sickness absence.</p>
Unable to sleep	Fatigue at work due to lack of sleep (may be compounded if shift work is carried out)	Consider temporary adjustment of work patterns to accommodate any difficulties.
Headaches	May impact on ability to work and concentrate.	Ensure easy access to supply of cold drinking water.
Psychological problems for example: loss of confidence, forgetfulness/ memory loss, difficulty	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily for example learning new	Encourage employee to discuss concerns openly at one-to-one meetings with manager or occupational health and discuss reasonable adjustments if required.

concentrating, change in mood, anxiety depression.	skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected.	<p>Provide access to Psychological services if required.</p> <p>Address any subsequent work related stress through wellbeing conversations and action plan, and a stress risk assessment.</p> <p>Suggest a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to if possible and required.</p>
Psychosocial and social impact.	May feel isolated from work colleagues.	<p>Promote physical and mental wellbeing at work. Provide access to counselling if required.</p> <p>Provide ability to network with colleagues experiencing similar issues, attendance at support groups, awareness sessions.</p>
Urogenital problems, for example increased frequency, urgency.	Need to access toilet facilities more frequently.	<p>Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom facilities.</p> <p>Consider the need for more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet.</p> <p>Ensure easy access to supply of cold drinking water.</p> <p>Take account of mobile workers schedules and their access to facilities during their working day.</p>
Heavy/Light Irregular Periods.	May need to access toilet and washroom facilities more frequently.	<p>Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom facilities.</p> <p>Consider the need for more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet. Take account of mobile workers schedules and their access to facilities during their working day.</p>

## **9 Transgender, non-binary and intersex staff**

The word 'trans' is widely used to include all people who live in the gender with which they identify, rather than the gender they were assigned at birth and in addition, people who do not identify with either gender may identify as 'non binary.' SaTH values its diversity and fosters a trans inclusive culture. People of diverse gender expressions and identities experience Menopause, and it is therefore not just an issue for female colleagues.

Transgender, non-binary and intersex staff may experience Menopause, either due to age-related hormonal changes or hormone treatments and surgeries. It is important to acknowledge some trans, non-binary and intersex staff may not wish to disclose their menopausal symptoms as this may mean disclosing their trans or intersex status. It can therefore be particularly difficult for these employees to access support and/or ask for adjustments. Within each of these groups, people's needs will be different and so it is crucial to listen to people on an individual basis and allow them to take the lead on their conversations and required adjustments.

Trans men, those who identify as male, but were assigned female at birth (AFAB) will experience a natural Menopause if their ovaries remain in place and no hormone therapy is given. Trans men will also experience menopausal symptoms if the ovaries and uterus are surgically removed (this may happen at an earlier age than commonly happens with a natural Menopause). Symptoms may be reduced or complicated if hormone therapy (such as the male hormone testosterone) therapy is in place.

Trans women, those who identify as female, but were assigned male at birth (AMAB) undertaking hormone therapy will usually remain on this for life, and should generally experience limited 'pseudo' menopausal (menopausal-like) symptoms - unless hormone therapy is interrupted, or hormone levels are unstable. Such treatment interruptions however can be a common experience for trans women (and trans men).

## **10 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women**

There are differences in biological and hormonal changes in women of different races and ethnicity. There are significant differences among women's perceptions, attitudes and expectations surrounding Menopause, and this is hugely influenced by their race, culture and ethnicity.

Some research has found that there is a variation in the average age at which Menopause takes place between women of different ethnic backgrounds. Reporting of the most common and significant symptoms of Menopause has also been found to vary among different ethnic groups. It is unclear to what extent these differences are caused by social, economic, language and cultural factors rather than a woman's ethnic origin.

Women who do not have English as a first language may have more difficulty in communicating symptoms or difficulties they are experiencing. They may not describe things in the same way and some words may not have a direct translation from one language into another. This may make it more difficult for women to access medical advice or ask for help or adjustments at work. It is key to remember that all women experience Menopause differently, Menopause is an individual experience. Support could be sought from the Staff Networks via the Equality Diversity and Inclusion team.

## **11 Expectations of Managers**

Line managers are not expected to initiate Menopause conversations with employees. Conversations should, in the main, be initiated by the employees themselves or resulting from Occupational Health referrals. In these circumstances an initial conversation should take place to support colleagues and further follow up conversations may be required on a basis to be agreed with the employee. Detailed guidance on how to hold a wellbeing conversation can be found on the Trust intranet [SaTH Intranet - Wellbeing conversations](#), with further information in the SaTH Menopause Toolkit . [Menopause - A Guide for Managers and Staff by The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust - Issuu](#)

An environment of openness, sensitivity and awareness about Menopause is to be encouraged, to give employees confidence to ask for support. A line manager's responsibilities are to help and support their employees with their health and wellbeing. Line managers are however not expected to resolve the employee's symptoms of Menopause. Providing supportive coaching discussions will enable your employee to think of ideas and solutions to help with their menopausal symptoms, or as a minimum it will signpost them to specialists, be these health professionals or other employee assistance programmes (EAPs). For the range of support options open to employees please see [Menopause - A Guide for Managers and Staff by The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust - Issuu](#)

## **12 Training**

This policy can be accessed via the Trust's Intranet.

Health Roster training to understand how to add Menopause as a secondary reason for absence can be accessed via the intranet's e-Rostering user guides here, [SaTH Intranet - Non-Medical eRostering | Roster Manager](#)

Take advice from the workforce/HR team.

## **13 Implementation Plan**

Management training will be revised to ensure it is aligned to this new policy.

## **14 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)**

This policy applies to all employees equally and does not discriminate positively or negatively between protected characteristics.

## 15 Process for monitoring compliance of policy

<b>Aspect of compliance or effectiveness being monitored</b>	<b>Monitoring method</b>	<b>Responsibility for monitoring</b>	<b>Frequency of monitoring</b>	<b>Group or Committee that will review the findings and monitor completion of any resulting action plan</b>
The Trust will maintain sufficient records to support high level reporting and trend analysis	Staff survey results, People pulse results	Organisational Development Team	Quarterly/ Annually in line with surveys.	Menopause Stakeholder Group
This policy document outlines good practice and shall be considered alongside the implementation of absence, capability, disciplinary and performance policies.	Review of policy when updated	Organisational Development Team	On policy review	JNCC Policies

## 16 Local and National Support available on the intranet

There is a wealth of local and national support groups available for staff. For a full up to date list, please refer to the manager's resources folder, the Health and Wellbeing Intranet Pages and [Menopause - A Guide for Managers and Staff by The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust - Issuu](#)

## Appendix 1

### Checklist to support women to identify their symptoms

Review the attached list to see if there are any symptoms which you are experiencing:

- This list is not exhaustive
- Remember some of these symptoms may be indicators of other medical conditions so don't just ignore them
- If you are in the age range 45-55 and you present yourself to your GP with a range of these symptoms you would not necessarily need a blood test to confirm whether you are in Menopause

	All the time	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
Physical Symptoms				
Palpitations ( heart beating faster)				
Hot flushes/night sweats				
Struggling with sleep				
Skin issues(dryness, itching, acne)				
Weight gain or bloating				
Bladder leakage/need to go to toilet more frequently				
Vaginal dryness				
Pain 'down below'				
Heavy dragging feeling in vagina				
Breast tenderness				
Changes to periods				
Feeling dizzy or faint				
Numbness in parts of body				
Aching joints				
Psychological Symptoms				
Tearful				
Anxious/worrying				
Mood swings				
Low confidence				
Memory problems				
Low mood or depression				
Panic attacks				
Irritability				
Unable to concentrate				
Inability to multi task				
Brain fog				

## Managing your Menopause

3-stage process can help those experiencing Menopause understand their options and choices for managing symptoms. Everyone's experience of Menopause is different. Everyone experiences different symptoms, has different views or philosophies about how they'd prefer to manage them and different medical histories, too. The following pages help anyone experiencing Menopause symptoms work out what's right for them, and plan their next steps.

### Stage One

What are your symptoms?

Do you experience these symptoms more at certain times?

Prioritise the top 3 or 4

How do they affect you at home and at work?

### Stage Two

What is your personal philosophy to manage symptoms and long term health?

Do you prefer the medical, complementary or lifestyle approach, or a combination?

Decide who you are going to talk to and when?

Establish who can help you at home? And at work?

### Stage Three

What do you plan to do?

Learn more about Menopause (if you need to)?

Manage your symptoms and long-term health?

Decide who you are going to talk to? And by when?