

1 Policy Statement

Elizabeth Finn Homes Limited is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment and recognises the importance for individuals to be healthy and well at work. This policy and guidance is for both managers and employees to provide the best support to help individuals manage menopausal symptoms in the workplace.

The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and it can be a difficult and challenging transition. Whilst not every woman suffers with symptoms, supporting those who do can greatly improve their working experience.

Menopause should not be a taboo or hidden subject. It is important that everyone understands what menopause is, and to be able to talk about it without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women – everyone should be aware of menopause.

2 List of acronyms

HR - Human Resources

NICE - National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

OH - Occupational Health

NHS - National Health Service

GP - General Practitioner.

3 Aims

The aims of the policy are:

- Create an environment where colleagues feel comfortable talking about menopause;
- Ensure employees understand what menopause is and that managers are aware of symptoms, potential impact in a working environment, and how they can support women at work;
- Ensure that women suffering with menopausal symptoms feel confident asking for support and reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles;
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

4 Definitions

Menopause is defined as a biological state in a woman's life that's occurs when she stops menstruating, and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for women to reach menopause is 51, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons

Perimenopause is the time leading up to a menopause when women may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be a considerable time before the menopause.

Postmenopausal is the time after the menopause has occurred.

5 Symptoms of menopause

Not every woman is affected by the symptoms of menopause and not all women will want support or help during this time. Up to 75% of women do experience menopausal symptoms and 25% of those can be considered severe.

It should be noted that some women will have symptoms but might struggle/may not wish to ask for help with such a personal experience. Just because a woman may not be asking for help, it doesn't mean she may not be suffering.

Physical symptoms of the menopause can include:

- hot flushes
- insomnia
- fatigue
- poor concentration
- headaches
- skin irritation
- urinary problems.

As a result of the above, or as an extension of the hormone imbalance, individuals going through the menopause can also experience psychological difficulties, including:

- depression
- anxiety
- panic attacks
- mood swings
- irritability
- problems with memory
- loss of confidence.

It is also commonly acknowledged that Hormone Replacement Therapy, medication which is often prescribed for menopause, can have side effects which cause problems at work. These include nausea, headaches and leg cramps.

On average, most menopausal symptoms last around 4 years (but can last significantly longer). These symptoms can affect a woman's personal and work life significantly. It is therefore essential that support mechanisms are easily accessible within the workplace.

6 Supporting employees during menopause

We aim to normalise conversations about menopause in the workplace and remove any stigma. Menopause should not be a taboo subject. We encourage employees to have discussions about the menopause and be supportive of each other.

All employees and managers should familiarise themselves with the Menopause policy and guidance. All employees should respect any necessary adjustments made for their colleagues because of their menopausal symptoms.

It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. If you are struggling with any aspect of your role because of symptoms associated with the menopause, you should tell your manager, who will treat the matter sensitively and professionally with complete confidence. So that we can give you the best support possible, we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations.

Alternatively, your manager may talk to you if they notice a change in your behaviour or performance.

Managers should use the guidance document in Appendix 1 to support conversations with women needing support/workplace adjustments during their menopause. Workplace adjustments should be mutually agreed where reasonable within the working environment and implemented ensuring ongoing dialogue and review dates to ensure the support is still appropriate for the symptoms (as these may change over time).

If adjustments are unsuccessful, or if the symptoms are very complex, managers can refer employees to Occupational Health for further advice and support. OH will discuss any concerns with the employee and provide support and advice to the manager and the employee in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments, if required.

If a member of staff is unable to speak with their manager about their menopause, or feel unsupported, staff can talk to a Mental Health First Aider, Human Resources or EFHL's employee assistant provider's DAS, who can be contacted on 0117 934 2121.

7 Making Adjustments to Your Role

To help you in your daily duties, your manager will explore making adjustments to your role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on you. Risk assessments will be consulted to identify potential issues. We acknowledge that the menopause affects each individual in different ways so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it with you first.

Examples of adjustments include:

- changing your working location so you are closer to toilet facilities, away from hot and cold spots around the office or to ensure greater access to natural light;
- allowing changes to our normal rules on work wear;
- implementing further temperature control, such as access to a fan;
- assessing how work is allocated and whether you are affected at particular points of the day;
- providing a quiet place to work or relax;
- allowing additional rest breaks;
- providing sanitary products in toilet and shower facilities;
- changing start and finish times;
- considering flexible working hours or allowing you to work from home.

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

We are legally obliged by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or working conditions if they have a disability that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role and we will ensure compliance with our obligations in this regard.

You may also be entitled to make a flexible working request. Please read our flexible working policy if you would like more details.

8 If You Are Unwell Due to Menopausal Symptoms

You are not expected to come to work if you are unwell because of menopausal symptoms. If you are unwell you should contact your line manager as soon as you are able before the start of your shift and follow our usual sickness reporting procedure.

9 Behaviour of Others

There is an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues.

We maintain a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and will treat any and all complaints seriously. If you feel that you have been mistreated in any way by a colleague because of matters related to the menopause, please tell your line manager, the General Manager of the Home or Human Resources.

10 Other Support

Our employees have access to a confidential counselling telephone service who can provide advice and guidance for employees who would like support during the menopause. More details can be found [here](#)

Other external sources of help for those experiencing menopause include *[Enter sources such as Menopause Matters or Menopause Cafe.*

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1.0	26/10/2022	Patrick Condon	New document

Appendix 1 - Managers guidance for colleague discussion

It is important to remember that each woman is an individual and therefore affected by the menopause in different ways.

This document is a guide and has been developed using information from NICE, the NHS and other relevant organisations, Henpicked” (an organisation for women over 40 years old) and research (Menopause transition: effects on women’s economic participation, Government Equalities Office and The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP 2017).

It also takes into account a report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) April 2019, that 44% of women stating that the menopause significantly affected their mental and that 70% of respondents in the survey did not tell their employer about their symptoms. It is therefore vital that employees feel confident to be able to talk about menopause and what support they need.

If an employee would like to talk to with their manager about their symptoms, or generally how they are feeling (sometimes symptoms of menopause are not always recognised as such), the manager should:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room considering confidentiality;
- Encourage staff to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways they can be supported (see below);
- Hand out the Menopause support sheet (Appendix 2);
- Agree actions and how to implement them;
- Take brief notes on what is agreed;
- Agree if other members of the team need to be made aware of the situation and if so, how this should be done;
- Make a date for a follow up review meeting.

Symptoms and support

Symptoms can be physical and psychological and can include, but are not limited to:

Hot flushes

- Managers can request a temperature control for the employee’s work area, such as a fan on their desk, or moving closer to a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water.

Heavy/light periods

- Have access to washroom facilities;
- Request extra uniform;
- Ensure sanitary products are available on site or at Home.

Headaches

- Easy access to drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work if possible;
- Offer noise-reducing headphone to wear in the office, if appropriate;
- Have time out to take medication if required.

Difficulty sleeping

- Consider variations in start/finish times in line with the Flexible working policy.

Low mood

- Agree “time out” space if required, without needing permission;
- Identify a “buddy” for the colleague to talk to – outside the work area;
- Recommend attending the University’s Menopause Support Group; · Recommend contacting the Employee Assistance Programme.

Loss of confidence

- Managers should ensure they have regular catch up meetings with the employee (which need to be mutually agreed);
- If possible the manager can agree a protected time to catch up with work.

Poor concentration

- Managers can discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better and adjust the working pattern if possible;
- Review task allocation and workload;
- Provide memory assisting equipment;
- Offer a quiet space to work, if possible;
- Reduce interruptions, if possible;
- Ensure that other colleagues are aware of the above (with agreement from the employee);
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Anxiety

- Promote the counselling service provided by the Employee Assistance Programme;
- Identify a “buddy” for the staff member to talk to outside their work area;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques, go for a walk or undertake mindfulness activities.

Panic attacks

- Managers can agree time out when required, without the staff member asking for permission;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques, go for a walk or undertake mindfulness activities.

- Identify a “buddy” for the staff member to talk to outside their work area.

It may also be helpful to discuss if the employee has visited their GP and discussed their symptoms. If they have seen their GP it may be useful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral – but this is an option you should discuss with the employee first.

Appendix 2 - MENOPAUSE RESOURCES

If you or a loved one are experiencing menopause, you may have questions and not know where to look for the answers. We recommend resources that are supported by UK menopause specialists and in line with clinical guidance from the NHS, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and the British Menopause Society.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with a list of useful, up-to-date and free resources to help you through your menopause journey. It also includes tips on how to make the most of an appointment to discuss menopause and your symptoms with your GP.

Useful Resources

NHS - www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause - Specific advice from the National Health Service around managing menopausal symptoms, in line with NICE Guidance.

NICE Guidance - www.nice.org.uk/guidance - An overview for the public, of the UK NICE Guidance on diagnosis and management of the menopause, published in 2015. This covers advice to health care professionals about diagnosing menopause and treating short term symptoms.

The British Menopause Society - www.thebms.org.uk - Aimed at health care professionals and has an open access link to their Register of Menopause Specialists around the UK, both NHS and private.

Women's Health Concern - www.womens-health-concern.org - Patient arm of the British Menopause Society. Factsheets written by UK specialists include:

- The menopause
- HRT
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Menopause and hair loss
- Testosterone for women
- Contraception in peri-menopause
- Osteoporosis

Menopause Matters - www.menopausematters.co.uk - Written by a UK doctor, lots of information and a forum for discussion.

Daisy Network - www.daisynetwork.org - Provides information and support to younger people experiencing menopause and premature ovarian insufficiency (POI). Facebook page and support forums available.

Manage my Menopause - www.managemymenopause.co.uk - Online aid to help with your decision making around menopause treatments.

Books

- Menopause, The One Stop Guide by Kathy Abernethy

A practical guide to all things menopause, chapters on symptoms, health and lifestyle, HRT, non-HRT options, young menopause, menopause after cancer

Publisher: Profile

- Menopause: The change for the better by Deborah Garlick

With contributions from UK doctors, an overview of menopause and treatment options

Publisher: Bloomsbury

- The Good Menopause Guide, by Liz Earle

A non-medical guide to menopause, including tips on healthy living, diet and beauty

Publisher: Orion Spring

- Managing hot flushes and night sweats: a cognitive behavioural self help guide to the menopause, by Myra Hunter

Written by a clinical psychologist and offering a workbook alongside, this covers self-help strategies for flushes and sweats

Publisher: Routledge

How to get the most out of your GP appointment

If you decide that medical treatment may be an option for your symptoms, make an appointment with your General Practitioner. Find out which practitioner in your practice has an interest in menopause (it may not be your usual GP); you are free to choose which doctor within a practice to see.

Things to consider:

- Start the conversation about menopause, be specific about your symptoms and say if you are simply looking for reassurance of what's normal or if you want to be offered treatment;
- Plan your questions and be prepared – time will be short so try to keep your questions specific and personal to you;
- Be aware of your choices, hormonal and non-hormonal, medical and non-medical and think about which you wish to discuss in advance;
- Don't be disappointed if it takes more than one appointment or if you are given information to read before a prescription is given. It helps if you can say you have already read one of the recommended websites;

- Remember most people of average age of menopause (45 years+) will not need any diagnostic blood tests for menopause. Younger people experiencing menopause, however, may need them.