



MENOPAUSE POLICY

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Introduction

Ulster University is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all employees. Ulster University acknowledges their responsibility to create awareness of the menopause and to provide training opportunities for all employees. This policy sets out the guidelines for members of employees and managers on providing the right supportive environment for those employees experiencing menopausal symptoms at work. Menopause is a transition stage in women's lives, marked by hormonal changes and no longer having periods. Menopause usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. For many, symptoms last about 4 years, but in some cases, symptoms can last a lot longer. All stages and types of menopause are different and symptoms can vary from person to person, and range from very mild to severe

While we predominantly refer to 'women' in relation to the menopause in this guidance, we also recognise and appreciate that the menopause and menopausal symptoms can impact people of all genders. Menopause symptoms can be experienced by some non-binary people and some transgender men and women. Transgender people require inclusive support and flexibility in the workplace, and they may have additional needs around privacy, confidentiality, and access to specific support for dealing with menopause.

Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden', therefore we want everyone to understand what menopause is, and be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is a topic that women and men need to have an understanding of.

This policy sets out the guidelines on providing support for employees and managers to help managers support employees with menopausal symptoms at work.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- i) Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- ii) Ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently have informed conversations when requested, and are clear on the policy and practices – with support from the Employee Wellbeing team, Occupational Health and People Partners where appropriate.

- iii) Provide information and enhance awareness of the range of potential symptoms of menopause, the impact this can have on the individual concerned, the benefits of raising awareness with work colleagues, how managers can support individuals at work and in particular around implementing reasonable adjustments as well as providing a safe and supportive environment to have conversations.
- iv) Create an environment and culture where individuals experiencing menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss this and ask for support from their manager or Employee Wellbeing Advisor who may recommend a referral to Occupational Health. Reasonable adjustments may also be discussed (Resource Pack for Managers' Guidance).

Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all University employees

Definitions used in this policy

Menopause

A biological stage that occurs when a woman stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive years. As noted above menopause/menopausal symptoms may be experienced by Transgender men and women and non-binary individuals. The usual age for menopause is between 45-55 years, however, it can be earlier or later than this, either naturally or due to surgery, illness or other reasons. There is no pre-defined length of time where menopausal symptoms can be present as this varies from person to person and can last for several years.

Perimenopause

Is the time leading up to menopause when changes may be experienced, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. These symptoms can be experience for several years prior to menopause.

Premature menopause

Approximately 1% of women experience menopause before the age of 40. This is known as **premature menopause** or medically as premature ovarian insufficiency.



Post menopause

Is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months. Menopausal symptoms may be ongoing.

Throughout this policy, 'menopause' is used to refer to all stages i.e., perimenopause, menopause and post menopause.

Symptoms of Menopause

It is important to note that not every woman will experience every symptom, or even need help or support. However, the great majority of individuals do experience some symptoms, and for many it may impact on daily living / working.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and can include hot flushes, problems with memory and concentration, muscular aches and joint pain, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence, fatigue and difficulty sleeping (see also Resource Pack).

Objectives

Managing the symptoms of menopause in the workplace requires line managers to be knowledgeable, supportive and empathetic whilst offering practical support.

Support from managers / colleagues / Employee Wellbeing / Occ Health / People Partners and self-care will help those experiencing menopause to manage symptoms. The Resource Pack details some recommendations to support symptomatic individuals, who may need advice and support. The Resource Pack also contains a template to assist in recording conversations, and agreed actions and reasonable adjustments, with members of employees.

In accordance with NHS guidelines, individuals experiencing symptoms of menopause should be advised to seek medical advice and support from their GP.



Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

All employees should:

Keep themselves informed about the menopause through information and training provided by the University.

Take reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing and make use of the support available via this policy through informed conversations with their line manager or Employee Wellbeing Advisor / Occupational Health or their trade union representative.

Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment.

Be willing to help and support their colleagues.

Understand that colleagues may be experiencing menopause and have reasonable adjustments in place as a consequence.

Line Managers

All line managers should:

Keep themselves informed through information and training provided by the University.


Foster a considerate, open and supportive working culture

Be familiar with the University's menopause policy.

Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively, professionally and with required confidentiality.

Understand that some employees, particularly transgender and non-binary individuals, may be more hesitant about seeking support due to social stigma.

Use the guidance in the Resource Pack as appropriate, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any reasonable adjustments required.



Record adjustments discussed, those agreed, and actions to be implemented. Because of the type of information, it contains it will be kept strictly confidential and in accordance with the data protection requirements.

Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates.

Ensure that all agreed reasonable adjustments are implemented within agreed timescales

Where reasonable adjustments are unsuccessful, or additional support is required, the Line Manager may:

Liaise with Employee Wellbeing who may recommend a referral or re-referral to Occupational Health.

Review Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical.

Through discussion with the employee, update the action plan, continue to discuss with the employee and review as required.

Occupational Health

The role of Occupational Health is to:

Provide advice to employees, line managers and Employee Wellbeing in relation to workplace adjustments where menopause symptoms are impacting Employee Wellbeing and capacity to work.

Signpost employee to the GP and to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

Liaise with other medical experts as necessary such as the employee's GP or specialist consultant, with the employee's consent.

Liaise with the employee, line manager, Employee Wellbeing advisor and all relevant parties to recommend appropriate reasonable adjustments and phased return processes as appropriate. This may include the TU H&S or equality representative where consent has been given

Provide support and advice to Line Managers or Employee Wellbeing in identifying reasonable adjustments, if required.



Employee Wellbeing Advisors

The role of Employee Wellbeing Advisors is to:

Engage with those employees and line managers who require support and guidance including the interpretation and implementation of this policy.

Work with line managers on the development of approaches to support those experiencing menopause.

Work in close collaboration with colleagues from the People and Culture team as required.

Inspire

Provide access to confidential 24/7 telephone counselling and face-to-face counselling for all members of employees.