

Topic: Menopause at Work

For additional information and support please contact the WeST HR Team on the above details.

Introduction

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) aims to promote a positive attitude towards menopause at work. WeST is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone and treating all individuals with dignity and respect in a workplace with an open and honest culture in which menopause can be discussed.

WeST recognises that employees experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.

Definition of the Menopause

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most employees' lives. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the employee stops having periods. Employees may have a wide range of physical and/or psychological symptoms and often encounter difficulties at work because of these.

Each employee will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

There are different types of menopause:

Menopause – marked by changes in the hormones and the individual stops having periods. Individuals may also experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms because of the menopause. See: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms/>

Premature menopause – for some it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger. This is sometimes called **premature ovarian insufficiency**.

Medical or surgical menopause – there are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the individuals age.

Perimenopause – Perimenopause means "around menopause" and refers to the time during which the body makes the natural transition to menopause, marking the end of the reproductive years. Perimenopause is also called the menopausal transition.

Post-menopause – a term used when an individuals periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon. Problematic symptoms may continue for years and require longer-term treatment or reasonable adjustments.

Symptoms

Managers Guide



51 Encombe Street, Plymouth, PL9 7GN
01752 891754 ext. 1765
HR@westst.org.uk
www.westst.org.uk

Menopause and perimenopause can cause a range of symptoms, each individual may have different experiences. Current research indicates over 30 known symptoms, the most frequent include:

1. Hot flashes
2. Night sweats
3. Irregular periods
4. Mood changes
5. Breast soreness
6. Decreased libido
7. Vaginal dryness
8. Headaches
9. Tingling extremities
10. Burning mouth

Support for Employees Experiencing the Menopause

Please see WeST Menopause Policy on the staff portal for full details.

Some employees experiencing the menopause may find that related symptoms may impact on their health and wellbeing, and as an employer WeST aims to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable through the identification/implementation of individual reasonable adjustments. Employees are encouraged to liaise with their line manager regarding individual circumstances.

The line manager should:

- carefully consider the information presented and explore the impact at work.
- provide a supportive and reassuring response.
- maintain a confidential record of the discussion and agreed actions.
- consider adapting the sickness trigger points to ensure no detriment.
- consider and agree the relevant support/reasonable adjustments at work.
- plan regular reviews of support/reasonable adjustments at work – at least annually.

Having explored and considered symptoms / impact, it may be agreed between the line manager and individual employee that a bespoke risk assessment is required to further consider specific needs and to ensure that the working environment will not exacerbate menopause symptoms. This will ensure clarity of the reasonable adjustments and how long they are due to be in place – it may be that some are temporary and some are permanent. The risk assessment will be optional and may not be applicable to all circumstances, however, it will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required.

Types of reasonable adjustment may include:

- work environment (space, temperature, noise, access to washroom facilities)
- types of uniform / dress code
- changing/washing facilities for staff to access during the working day
- flexitime (adjusting start and finish times for example)
- homeworking (where appropriate for the duties of the post)
- flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks
- flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments
- provision of private spaces for employee to rest temporarily

Please refer to the full policy for examples of reasonable adjustments and support.

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