

Policy

Menopause

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Lyme Regis Town Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.2 The menopause is a natural process and for many can be positively managed through lifestyle adjustments. However, some employees may need additional considerations to support and improve their experience at work.
- 1.3 The council is committed to supporting employees who are affected in any way by the menopause and to support and inform managers so that employees reporting issues are treated fairly and given appropriate support.
- 1.4 This policy is inclusive of all gender identities including trans and non-binary employees.

2. Legislation

- 2.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health safety and welfare of all workers. Within this, employers are required to perform risk assessments which should include any specific risks to menopausal employees.
- 2.2 Under the Equality Act 2010, employers have a duty not to discriminate in terms of age, sex and disability. Detrimental treatment related to the menopause could represent direct or indirect sex discrimination on any or all of these protected characteristics.
- 2.3 Acas has a Code of Practice on handling requests to work flexibly in a reasonable manner.

3. Aims

- 3.1 To support employees to remain at work.
- 3.2 To raise awareness of menopause, the related issues and how this can affect employees.
- 3.3 To break the stigma and taboo surrounding the menopause at work and to promote an environment in which employees feel confident in discussing menopausal issues and ask for support and adjustments, if required.
- 3.4 To provide guidance and direction on how to support employees who raise menopausal issues, not only for the individuals experiencing the

menopause but also those who may be affected indirectly, which may include managers, colleagues, partners and family members.

- 3.5 To inform managers of the potential symptoms of menopause, how this can affect employees and what can be done to support individuals, including reasonable adjustments.

4. Definitions

4.1 Menopause

The menopause is a natural part of ageing and refers to the time in life when periods stop and the natural reproductive cycle ends. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 with the average age being 51.

4.2 Premature ovarian insufficiency (premature menopause)

Approximately 1 in 100 affected people will experience menopause before 40 years of age (naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or treatment).

4.3 Peri-menopause

The time leading up to menopause when menopausal symptoms can be experienced. Symptoms can start a few months or even years before periods stop.

4.4 Post-menopause

The time after the last period.

5. Symptoms of Menopause

- 5.1. Not everyone will notice symptoms or need help and support. The most common symptoms include:

5.1.1 Hot flushes

5.1.2 Night sweats

5.1.3 Sleep disruption

5.1.4 Fatigue

5.1.5 Difficulty concentrating/memory problems/loss of confidence

5.1.6 Mood disturbances including anxiety and depression

5.1.7 Headaches

5.1.8 Irregular periods/heavy bleeding

5.1.9 Bone and joint problems

- 5.2 Symptoms on average continue for two to four years, however some individuals will experience symptoms for longer.

- 5.3 The nature of symptoms will vary from mild to severe. These symptoms can have a significant adverse impact on the quality of both personal and working life.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 All employees are responsible for:

- 6.1.1 Taking reasonable responsibility and care for their own health and wellbeing
- 6.1.2 Being open to having conversations with their line manager. If they feel unable to speak to their line manager they can also speak to another manager, a member or a trade union
- 6.1.3 Upholding a positive working environment, treating others with dignity and respect.

6.2 Line managers will:

- 6.2.1 Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy
- 6.2.2 Be willing to have open discussions with employees about changes in their health, including issues relating to the menopause, treat the discussion sensitively and recognise that each individual's experience may differ
- 6.2.3 Use the guidance in section 7 to inform the discussion, reviewing together before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported.
- 6.2.4 Use appendix 1 to record a summary of the discussion and any agreed actions or adjustments.
- 6.2.5 Ensure on-going communication and agree a plan for review where appropriate.
- 6.2.6 Implement agreed adjustments
- 6.2.7 If adjustments have not been successful and/or a member of staff is reporting on-going difficulties or concerns about their health at work, consider a referral to occupational health for further advice.

6.3 Members will:

- 6.3.1 Offer support to managers and employees on the interpretation of this policy
- 6.3.2 Support awareness-raising activities including training and education for employees and managers

7. Guidance for Managers' Discussions with Employees

- 7.1 Regular, informal conversations between managers and employees can enable discussions about issues related to menopause. One of the most valuable things a manager can do is listen and respond sympathetically if issues relating to menopause are reported. These conversations can assist to identify support at work which can make a real difference to how employees cope with menopause. This may enable them to continue working well, productively and to remain at work.
- 7.2 Employees experiencing menopausal issues (directly or indirectly) may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to approach their manager. However, if a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect a person, this can assist in promoting an environment where employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.
- 7.3 If an employee wishes to talk about changes in health, including symptoms of menopause, it is important to:
 - 7.3.1 Encourage the employee to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP practice
 - 7.3.2 Maintain confidentiality when handling health information (seek a private room/office and ensure any records are stored in a safe and confidential manner)
 - 7.3.3 Allow for sufficient time to have the conversation and encourage the employee to be open and honest when discussing any difficulties they may be experiencing
 - 7.3.4 Explore with them ways in which they can be supported, if required (see section 8 for common symptoms and adjustments to consider)
 - 7.3.5 Agree an action plan, record the outcome of the discussion and agree a review timeframe (see appendix 1 for a discussion template)
 - 7.3.6 Provide details of support and external services available (appendix 2)

8. Potential Adjustments

- 8.1 Hot flushes can result in employees feeling uncomfortable and less tolerant of workplace temperatures, uniform may be uncomfortable and personal protective equipment (PPE) may be uncomfortable if worn too long. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.1.1 Review control of workplace temperature and ventilation – consider desktop fans in an office or locate desks closer to an opening window or away from a heat source.
 - 8.1.2 Access to drinking water

- 8.1.3 Access to washroom facilities (take into consideration employees who work in multiple locations)
- 8.1.4 Avoid tight fitting uniforms
- 8.1.5 For staff who are not required to wear uniforms, recommend loose fitting layers and cotton fabrics rather than manmade fibres
- 8.1.6 Access to a rest area/room for breaks if work involves prolonged periods of standing or sitting
- 8.1.7 Access to a quiet room/area for a short break to manage a severe hot flush
- 8.1.8 Limit the time spent wearing PPE.
- 8.2 Night sweats or sleep disruption can result in increased tiredness, fatigue and concentration issues. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.2.1 Consider flexible working hours or temporary shift changes to accommodate difficulties
- 8.3 Difficulty concentrating or memory problems can affect an employee's performance, cause difficulty in making decisions or trigger work-related stress. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.3.1 Regular supervision/review with manager for additional support, if required
 - 8.3.2 Review task allocation and workload
 - 8.3.3 Consider flexibility in working pattern or shift pattern; for example, if concentration is better or worse at certain times of the day.
 - 8.3.4 Offer a quiet place to work if feasible
 - 8.3.5 Identify and address work-related stress through risk assessment.
- 8.4 Low mood, depression, anxiety, panic attacks and loss of confidence can make work tasks more difficult to carry out and performance may be affected. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.4.1 Provide opportunity to openly discuss any concerns/difficulties
 - 8.4.2 Regular supervision/review with manager for additional support, if required
 - 8.4.3 Access to a quiet area for a short break if required, allowing time for simple relaxation and mindfulness techniques
 - 8.4.4 Encourage that they discuss symptoms with their GP practice
 - 8.4.5 Signpost to sources of support

- 8.4.6 Consider referral to occupational health (see appendix 2 for contact details)
- 8.5 Headaches can affect concentration. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.5.1 Access to drinking water
 - 8.5.2 Access to quiet space or area for a short break and to take medication if required.
- 8.6 Irregular/heavy bleeding can cause discomfort and regular breaks away from an employee's duties. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.6.1 Access to toilet and washroom facilities
 - 8.6.2 May require more frequent short breaks.
- 8.7 Bone and joint problems mean certain moving and handling tasks may be more uncomfortable. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.7.1 Local risk assessments and moving and handling assessments, if required
 - 8.7.2 Consider temporary adjustments or modifications to work tasks
 - 8.7.3 Allow for more frequent breaks so the employee can stretch.
- 8.8 Personal/intimate issues. Potential adjustments:
 - 8.8.1 Advise to attend GP practice for advice
 - 8.8.2 Signpost to the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

Appendix 1 – Confidential discussion template

Name	
Job Title	

Manager's Name	
Date of Discussion	

Summary of Discussion

Agreed Actions/Adjustments

Date of next review meeting

Signed (employee)

Signed (manager)

Appendix 2 –Sources of information/support

If you have troublesome menopausal symptoms, please arrange to see your GP practice in the first instance who will be able to discuss management options with you.

External links

- Menopause Matters <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency) <https://www.daisynetwork.org/>
- Vitality (menopause FAQs) <https://www.vitality.co.uk/support/health/menopause/faqs/>
- The Menopause Exchange <https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
- Women's Health concern <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>
- Remploy (mental health support service)
- Henpicked (community site for women over 40) <https://www.menopausecafe.net/>
- Dorset Chamber (raising awareness within the business community) <https://dorsetchamber.co.uk/menopause-resources/>
- Menopause Support <https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>

Occupational health

If further support is needed, a referral to occupational health may be considered. A referral must be made by the employee's line manager, with the employee's consent.

Referrals are made to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Team at Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust: occupational.health@nhs.net