



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Menopause Policy

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PURPOSE

The University of Lincoln is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone. We recognise and value our diversity and trans-inclusive culture and are aware people of diverse gender expressions and identities experience menopause. We recognise that menopause is therefore not just an issue for female colleagues. Transgender, non-binary and intersex colleagues may experience the 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.

This policy aims to raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about both natural and induced menopause and perimenopause, including the key symptoms. This policy aims to encourage staff to feel comfortable talking about menopause openly, without embarrassment. The aim is to enable individuals to manage perimenopause and menopause symptoms at work and feel they can ask for support and reasonable adjustments to enable them to continue to effectively deliver their role.

SCOPE

This policy applies equally to all University staff. This policy is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment – however, if the University wishes to amend the Menopause Policy, staff will be consulted prior to this on any proposed changes.

POLICY AIMS

To provide an inclusive environment in which everyone feels comfortable engaging in discussions about the menopause

To raise awareness with staff about the menopause and its symptoms so those who need it feel able to engage in discussions with managers, Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC) or Occupational Health around support and adjustments, so they can continue to be effective at work.

To reduce the impact of menopause on attendance and performance at work.

PRINCIPLES

The University recognises that in many cases, individuals will be able to manage menopause symptoms themselves or with the support of their GP. However, it is noted that some individuals may experience menopausal symptoms to the extent that this impacts on their day to day and therefore working life.

The University will be open to considering a variety of ways to support staff experiencing symptoms of the menopause whilst balancing this with needs of the organisation.

The University will continue its commitment to creating and maintaining a positive and healthy workplace environment and to develop further the extensive portfolio of proactive support service provisions available to its employees, which currently include:

- Access to a free confidential 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) that provides a range of advice and support services to staff including counselling;
- Occupational Health provision;
- Access to an ongoing wellbeing and health check programme; and
- Ongoing programme of staff initiatives to support staff general health and wellbeing.
- This policy links with the Flexible Working policy and the Managing Sickness Absence policy.

WHO CAN EXPERIENCE THE MENOPAUSE

Menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle.

This can include:

- transgender or trans people - people whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
- intersex people - people who have both male and female sex characteristics such as hormones
- non-binary people - people who may identify as both male and female, neither male and female, or something different.

DEFINITIONS

The Menopause is when someone stops having periods. It occurs when the ovaries stop producing eggs and as a result, levels of hormones called oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone fall. There are four key stages:

Pre-menopause: the time in life before any menopausal symptoms occur.

Perimenopause: when menopausal symptoms occur due to hormone changes, but periods still happen (even if irregular). This usually starts at around 45 years of age.

Menopause: when there has been no period for 12 consecutive months.

Post-menopause: the time in life after 12 months with no periods.

The average age for someone to reach menopause is 51, but hormonal changes in the perimenopause phase mean that many experience symptoms for around 10 years prior to this.

Early menopause is when menopause occurs in someone between the age of 40-45. This can happen naturally or because of illness or surgery, for example certain cancer treatments and drugs can cause the onset of early menopause. Early menopause can also be induced as part of a treatment for some cancers.

Some individuals under the age of 40 will go through Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI), when the ovaries cease to function correctly, and may also experience menopausal symptoms. This affects around 1 in 100 women.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

EMPLOYEES

Employees should take personal responsibility for looking after their own health. Employees should be open and honest in conversations with managers/PPC.

If an employee is unable to speak to their line manager, or they do not feel supported by their line manager, they can speak to a member of PPC or a trade union representative.

Employees should contribute to a respectful and productive working environment and be willing to help and support their colleagues.

Employees should understand and respect any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

MANAGERS

Managers should:

Familiarise themselves with the menopause policy.

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

Follow any menopause related guidance provided by the University, signposting and reviewing it together with PPC, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, or what adjustments may be required.

Discuss a referral to Occupational Health if appropriate, review Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical. Record adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented, and ensure these are adhered to.

Respect the employee's right to privacy and confidentiality, ensuring all information shared with colleagues, line managers and PPC is treated as confidential.

Ensure they maintain an ongoing dialogue with the employee and review any adjustments regularly.

PPC

PPC will:

Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this policy.

Have open discussions with colleagues about menopause, and offer guidance, support, or adjustments in an attempt where possible to support the individual's requirements.

Assist with arranging Occupational Health appointments for staff and will discuss any recommendations with managers.

Respect employee's right to privacy and confidentiality, ensuring all information shared with colleagues, line managers and PPC is treated as confidential.

Review and update this policy when required.

Provide appropriate training for managers if required.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Occupational Health will:

Provide the University and the employee with advice and guidance on how best to support the employee during this time.

SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

It is recognised that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. While some experience no adverse symptoms of menopause, others experience a range of potentially debilitating symptoms. It is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, approximately 75% of women experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe and impact on daily life.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not exclusively, hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, mood swings, brain fog, difficulty in sleeping and loss of confidence. These can make individuals feel tired at work, anxious that they are not doing a good job and they may not be aware that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms and may worry there is something else wrong with them.

Without replacing hormones, ongoing symptoms can occur for the rest of someone's life. Lack of Oestrogen has a further effect on future health as it is linked with loss of bone density (leading to osteoporosis), heart disease, diabetes and dementia.

A comprehensive list of symptoms can be found [here](#).

SUPPORT AND ADVICE FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING MENOPAUSE

If symptoms are causing problems at work, you should speak confidentially to your line manager at an early stage so they can determine the most appropriate course of action to support your individual needs. A plan should be agreed with your line manager, and where appropriate, it should include details of any agreed reasonable adjustments.

If you do not wish to discuss the issue with your direct line manager, you may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague, an alternative manager, Occupational Health, a member of PPC and/or a trade union representative. In some circumstances an Occupational Health referral may be useful, and advice on the referral process can be obtained from your People Business Adviser or Business Partner.

It is recognised that some employees experiencing the menopause may find that related symptoms impact on their health and wellbeing, and we aim to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals. We recognise that the menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

In accordance with medical guidance, individuals are advised to seek medical advice from their GP when appropriate.

Please refer to the [Guide](#) which supports this policy for more practical guidance

FURTHER GUIDANCE/EXTERNAL LINKS

The following websites provide useful information and guidance on menopause and symptoms and is correct at the time of publication. Please check the web for up-to-date contact information. The University does not endorse or take responsibility for the information provided by external organisations:

[Balance - Homepage \(balance-menopause.com\)](https://balance-menopause.com)

[The Menopause Charity - Menopause Facts, Advice and SupportGuidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf \(fom.ac.uk\)](#)
(Faculty of Occupational Medicine)

www.womens-health-concern.org

www.menopausematters.co.uk

www.queermenopause.com (inclusive menopause resources)

www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/

www.care-first.co.uk The University's Employee Assistance service, CareFirst, who can be contacted at any time of the day or night for support. Contact telephone number 0808 168 2143.