

Menopause Policy

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1. Introduction

At Strathclyde we recognise the impact of menopause on staff health, wellbeing and productivity and are committed to supporting people at work during menopause.

We are committed to ensuring that, if you experience symptoms of menopause, you are supported as early and as effectively as possible. We will always aim to treat matters as confidentially as possible.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we:

- Support our colleagues to be open about any menopause symptoms they are experiencing.
- Support and empower line managers, together with relevant support services, to respond appropriately, sensitively, and confidentially to the needs of staff during this transitional stage of their lives.
- Encourage staff to consider how they can support their colleagues who are menopausal.
- Raise awareness of support available, including reasonable adjustments if appropriate.
- Foster and promote a supportive and well-informed working environment.
- Tackle inappropriate behaviours and attitudes that minimise the dignity, respect, safety and wellbeing for menopausal staff of all genders.

In this policy you will find information on what menopause is, the related symptoms, the impact that it can have on health and work and more. You may find this policy helpful if you are affected by menopause or are supporting a colleague who is experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

2. Who is Covered by this Policy?

This policy applies to all employees and specifically menopausal staff, together with carers or partners who may be seeking support.

It is not only women who go through menopause, and related symptoms. Some trans men and women, who may experience actual or pseudo menopause symptoms due to treatment or treatment interruptions, as well as non-binary people and intersex people can also be affected.

3. What is Menopause?

[Perimenopause](#) is the transition period from the start of menopause symptoms until you have your last period. During this time, you may experience a range of symptoms due to changing hormones. Periods will usually become less frequent over a few months or years before they stop altogether. They might be more irregular and become heavier or lighter. For some, they can stop suddenly.

[Menopause](#) is when you stop having periods for 12 consecutive months and means 'the last menstrual period'. This typically happens between the ages of 45-55 and it is a natural part of the ageing process. For some, this might happen earlier in life, for example if you have an auto-immune disease or cancer treatment.

The first sign of menopause is usually a change in the regular pattern of your periods, where you start having either unusually light or heavy periods. The frequency of periods can also be affected, where they might occur every two to three weeks, or they may not occur for months at a time.

Eventually, your periods will stop altogether although, for some individuals, other menopause symptoms might continue. You might begin to experience symptoms including migraines, irritability, and low mood, especially around the time you would get your period, without experiencing irregularity in periods.

Overall, this period of hormonal change and the symptoms you can experience can last from four to eight years and some existing conditions may be made worse by the onset of menopause. You might even find that the positive benefits outweigh the negative challenges over time.

4. What are the Impacts of Menopause at Work?

People experience menopausal symptoms differently, in both the variety and severity of symptoms. You will not necessarily experience the same symptoms as another colleague.

Common symptoms include, but are not limited to, anxiety; chills; depression; fatigue; hot flushes; irritability; low mood; migraines and headaches; muscle aches and joint pains; night sweats; palpitations; poor concentration, memory and 'brain fog'; recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs); reduced sex drive; skin irritation and dryness; sleep disturbance; and weight gain and slowed metabolism.

If you do experience any of these symptoms it could, potentially, impact your work in different ways. Challenges might include:

- Affecting your work performance.
- Pain that can impact your movement and physical capability.
- Fear of stigma and embarrassment which mean that you may be more reluctant to discuss your experience with colleagues or your manager due to negative past experiences or a perceived unsupportive response.
- Psychological symptoms, such as low mood, anxiety, and stress and sometimes the overall emotional impact of menstruation.
- Needing time off from work to manage symptoms. In the past you might have felt that you couldn't declare the real reason for your absence.

5. What Support is Available for Colleagues?

Given that staff can experience menopausal symptoms differently, we recognise that support will need to meet the specific needs of you as an individual. However, possible colleague related support may include:

- Referral to our staff [Occupational Health Service](#).
- Review of allocation of work and responsibilities if symptoms are negatively affecting performance.
- Reasonable adjustments and flexibility in working arrangements, including working environment, start/breaks/finishing times and time off to attend relevant medical appointments are detailed in our [Time Off for Medical and Dental Appointments Policy](#) as appropriate.
- Adoption of agile working, role permitting, including flexibility around working hours and breaks.
- Creating a supportive and inclusive working environment for colleagues and challenging inappropriate behaviours and attitudes.
- Where uniforms are provided, where possible provide additional uniforms to ensure it is possible to change during the day.

- Enabling a more comfortable working environment, taking into account temperature and lighting, to help staff manage their body temperature.

6. What Should I Do?

If you're a member of staff, you're expected to:

- Familiarise yourself with this policy and supporting [Menopause Guidance for Employees](#) (staff login required) and contribute to a supportive, inclusive and well-informed working environment.
- Speak to your manager if you experience menopausal symptoms – and your health, wellbeing or productivity are negatively impacted - if you feel comfortable to do so.
- Alternatively, if you feel you are unable to speak with your manager, or feel that discussions have not been handled appropriately, then you are encouraged to contact [Human Resources](#), the [Staff Disability Adviser](#), [Occupational Health](#) or our [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) provider. Any discussions will be treated sensitively and confidentially.
- We recognise that colleagues who are carers or partners, as well as other family members of those affected by menopause may also benefit from help. If this applies to you, you might find the support resources in our Menopause Guidance for Employees helpful.

If you're a manager you're expected to:

- Familiarise yourself with this policy and supporting [Menopause Guidance for Managers](#) (staff login required). Although line managers are not expected to be experts on menopause, you should have a basic understanding to support your colleagues.
- Sensitively listen to - and empathise with - the experiences and needs of those experiencing menopause.
- Consider the adjustments that can be made to accommodate the symptoms being experienced. Remember each situation will be different.
- It's important to recognise that the experience of some menopausal staff can be viewed as being a disability under the [Equality Act 2010](#) so you have a legal duty to consider and make reasonable adjustments. For more details, please refer to Section 2.3 of the supporting Menopause Guidance for Managers and the [Disability Policy](#).

7. Further Information and Support

If you've any queries about this policy, please talk to your manager or contact Human Resources. Further information and guidance, for both staff and managers, can also be found on our People Hub and [Wellbeing Hub](#).

And remember, our free and independent Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider, can also offer confidential support. Visit our [Wellbeing Hub](#) for more information.

8. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis. To see when the next review is due, please see our [Policy Review Schedule](#) (staff login required) on our People Hub.