



Menopause in the Workplace Policy

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1. Purpose and scope

[Insert Council name] is committed to promoting an inclusive and supportive working environment where all employees are treated fairly, with dignity, respect and understanding and their health and wellbeing is fully supported.

[Insert Council name] believes that the publication of a menopause policy is another step in our efforts to embed a culture of dignity, respect and inclusivity in the workplace and to promote gender equality.

Over XXX [Council to insert number] women are employed in the [Insert Council name] which accounts for over XX% of our workforce. We recognise 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.

We are committed to developing an organisational culture that supports employees experiencing menopause. We want them to feel comfortable to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for workplace adjustments.

We are committed to providing a safe working environment for all employees, including providing access to information about the menopause, signposting to appropriate healthcare and ensuring that adjustments and additional supports are available to those experiencing menopause symptoms.

This policy is intended to raise awareness of menopause amongst all employees, to provide guidance on workplace adjustments and supports that may be considered for employees and also outlines relevant roles and responsibilities.

This policy is intended to support persons who are experiencing, or who may in the future experience, menopausal symptoms.

2. Key principles

The following key principles inform this Policy and the approach of [Insert Council name] to menopause:

- a) Promote health, safety, welfare and wellbeing at work
- b) Promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- c) Be an employer of choice

3. Definitions

What is menopause?

The word “menopause” is a catch-all word for the various stages and types of changes that women’s bodies go through at this time and includes perimenopause, post menopause, early menopause, premature menopause, and induced menopause.

Menopause refers to the time when periods stop and the ovaries lose their reproductive function. Usually, this occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. The average age that this occurs in Ireland is 51 years. Periods may start to become less frequent over a few months or years before they stop. Sometimes they can stop suddenly. In some cases, periods can become very heavy in the years coming up to menopause. There are numerous symptoms associated with the menopause – further information is in section 4.

Perimenopause

Perimenopause (sometimes known as menopause transition) refers to the lead-up to menopause when the signs and symptoms of menopause are first observed and ends one year after the final menstrual period. The age in which this begins varies, but the average age is 45 years old. However, some women start to experience symptoms in their 30s or in rare cases, even younger.

Perimenopause can last several years and can affect physical, emotional, mental and social well-being. The Health Service Executive reports that typically perimenopause symptoms can start up to 7 years before your period stops.

Menopause is reached when a person is 12 months past their final period.

Menopause

Menopause is marked by the end of monthly menstruation (also known as a menstrual period or 'period') due to loss of ovarian follicular function. This means that the ovaries no longer release eggs.

The regularity and length of the menstrual cycle varies across the reproductive life span but the age at which natural menopause occurs is generally between 45 and 55 years for women worldwide. Natural menopause is deemed to have occurred after 12 consecutive months without menstruation for which there is no other obvious physiological or pathological cause and in the absence of clinical intervention. Menopause is a retrospective diagnosis as it can only be made after a full year of the absence of menstruation.

Post-menopause

As soon as a woman has been through menopause, they immediately become postmenopausal, and they are postmenopausal for the rest of their life. In this third phase of the menopause transition, they may still experience symptoms, commonly for a further five to seven years, though many experience symptoms for longer than this.

Early menopause

Early menopause is when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen by itself or as a side effect of some treatments.

Premature menopause

Premature menopause, also known as premature ovarian insufficiency (POI), is when a woman experiences menopause before the age of 40. While uncommon (<1% of population), it can have a significant impact on health, and requires treatment to prevent long term problems like osteoporosis, increased cardiovascular risk and cognitive decline.

Induced menopause

Induced menopause refers to menstrual periods that stop after surgical removal of the ovaries, chemotherapy or radiation damage to the ovaries, or from the use of other medications to intentionally induce menopause as part of the treatment of certain diseases. Induced menopause can happen at any age.

4. Menopause symptoms

Individuals may experience a spectrum of physical and psychological symptoms associated with menopause. The severity and duration of the symptoms will vary significantly. Some may experience multiple symptoms, either physical, psychological or a combination of both, over a prolonged period of time, and others may not.

Common physical symptoms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hot flushes• Night sweats• Difficulty sleeping• Fatigue• Lack of energy• Vaginal dryness and pain, itching or discomfort• Reduced sex drive (libido)• Discomfort during sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irregular periods• Headaches• Heart palpitations (a fast beating, fluttering or pounding heart)• Recurring UTI's• Loss of muscle• Weight gain• Joint aches and pains• Dry mouth and skin
Common psychological symptoms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low mood and irritability• Anxiety• Problems with memory or concentration such as brain fog	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tearfulness• Loss of confidence and self esteem

According to *The Menopause Benchmark Survey* by Behaviour & Attitudes¹, the following are the most commonly reported menopause symptoms:

¹ Department of Health. Understanding Menopause Highlights of Department of Health Research Carried out by B&A Oct 2022. Department of Health, Oct. 2022, www.gov.ie/en/publication/f1490-why-we-need-to-talk-about-menopause



78% of adults reported experiencing temperature regulation issues.



71% of adults reported experiencing fatigue.



70% of adults reported experiencing sleep issues.



59% of adults reported experiencing period changes.



62% of adults reported experiencing memory/concentration issues.



57% of adults reported experiencing weight and body changes



56% of adults reported experiencing mood changes.



49% of adults reported experiencing joint pain.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The Role of Human Resources

The Human Resource (HR) department plays a pivotal role in raising organisational-wide awareness of menopause and in creating and embedding a culture that is supportive and inclusive.

This can be achieved by:

- Engaging senior management to secure buy-in and endorsement for menopause policies and initiatives.
- Developing and implementing a menopause policy in their workplace.
- Undertaking relevant training to gain an understanding of how work patterns could impact symptoms and supporting flexible working arrangements, where possible.
- Providing training and awareness supports for line managers, including guidance on their roles and responsibilities in supporting employees in line with organisational policies.
- Providing menopause awareness training for employees as part of the Council's wellbeing programme.
- Identify a clear point of contact within the HR function (who may be a named contact person) who will provide direction to employees and managers on workplace supports and potential adjustments

5.2 The Role of the Manager

Managers have an important role to play in ensuring that employees affected by menopausal symptoms receive the right support, as they would with any other health condition. Managers are not expected to be experts when discussing menopause, but they should have an understanding of what supports are available to meet the needs of their employees.

In providing support and guidance to employees, managers should:

- Ensure all employees are aware of and familiar with their organisation's Menopause Policy.
- Undertake relevant training on menopause symptoms and the necessary workplace adjustments and supports that may be required.
- Promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues, including menopause, and help to create an environment where employees feel able to discuss their experience of menopause.

- Respect an employee's right not to discuss personal issues. They may be more comfortable talking to a colleague or another manager.
- Encourage employees to access support and guidance from their personal healthcare provider.
- Provide a private, confidential place for the staff member to discuss how their symptoms impact them at work.

5.3 The Role of the Employee

All employees have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand that colleagues may need adjustments to manage their menopausal symptoms.

In terms of individual employees experiencing symptoms associated with menopause:

- It is important that employees take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. If an employee is experiencing symptoms associated with menopause, they should first and foremost seek advice from their health care provider.
- If an employee is experiencing menopausal symptoms and feel they may need support at work, they should speak with their manager.
- Early discussions can help determine the most appropriate course of action, how to overcome any barriers and agree what support is needed.
- If an employee does not feel comfortable discussing the impact of menopause with their own manager, they should be encouraged to request a discussion with:
 - an alternative manager
 - a trusted colleague
- Employees should monitor how their symptoms are impacting them and if the supports put in place by their manager are effective in supporting the management of their symptoms while at work.
- If employees are experiencing menopause symptoms so severe that they are temporarily unable to work, sick leave can be availed of and managed as per the Council's Sick Leave policy. See Section 7 Menopause and Sick Leave.

6. Workplace adjustments

Menopause, in and of itself, is not an illness. However, some of the symptoms of menopause can cause illness and may impact on work performance and wellbeing in the workplace. There may be times when an employee who is experiencing severe symptoms may need adjustments to support them to continue working.

The purpose of workplace adjustment is to provide a supportive working environment by making appropriate adjustments and removing barriers wherever possible. The Council will explore options with employees to determine what support would be helpful based on the nature of the symptoms they are experiencing.

The Council will consider what practical measures they can implement to support an employee and lessen the impact of menopausal symptoms at work and to also ensure that working conditions do not exacerbate symptoms.

Depending on the circumstances, requests for workplace adjustments may be approved on a temporary basis with ongoing review to ensure that both the employee and the manager are satisfied that the arrangements in place are adequate for the needs of the employee and the business needs of the Council. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, balancing the needs of the employee and the business.

Managers should confirm in writing any arrangements agreed verbally. This is particularly important if a request has been made informally and has been agreed as a temporary measure.

A Template Record of Confidential Discussion and Agreed Supportive Arrangement is available at Appendix A.

7. Menopause and sick leave

Notwithstanding that menopause is not classified as an illness, there may be instances where an employee becomes unwell as a result of menopause symptoms and may need to avail of sick leave.

Employees should follow procedures for reporting illness in accordance with the Council's Sick Leave policy and should consider letting their manager know if they are aware that any absences are menopause related. As this issue is often perceived as

intensely personal, a manager may not be aware that any impacts are menopause-related.

8. Supporting performance during menopause

Menopause could have a negative effect on an employee's ability to perform at work due to fatigue from a difficulty in sleeping, mood changes or problems with memory and concentration.

Managers should take into account the impact of menopause on an employee's performance and be as flexible as possible when considering what adjustments can be made to a role or working conditions to help an employee maintain performance levels.

For some, menopausal symptoms can last for a considerable and undefined period of time. Managers and employees should consider this when looking at both workplace adjustments and performance.

9. Reasonable accommodation

Under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2021 employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation for any employee who has a disability.

In the equality legislation, "disability" is a broadly-defined term that could, in certain circumstances, include some of the medical issues that can arise during menopause.

An employer will have a duty to make reasonable accommodations and take appropriate measures that are needed by an employee to have access to employment, to participate or advance in employment or to undergo training, unless the measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer.

Examples of reasonable accommodation may include but are not limited to:

- Making adjustments to premises and/or working space where reasonably practicable
- Allocating minor or subsidiary duties to another employee
- Altering working hours/reduction in hours
- Changing the location of the work
- Providing blended working arrangements
- Offering additional or extended training for the post
- Acquiring relevant equipment or modifying existing equipment

10. Confidentiality

Every employee has the right to privacy in respect of their medical status. It is essential that managers ensure that all information shared by the employee is treated in the strictest confidence and is only shared with others where necessary and with the consent of the employee.

It is good practice to discuss with the employee how they wish any questions from their peers/colleagues to be managed. Confidentiality must be respected unless the employee indicates that they approve of their team being informed on their behalf in a tactful and respectful way.

11. Further resources

Further practical information and support can be found at:

- **Department of Health Menopause awareness:** gov.ie - [Menopause \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)
- **HSE Menopause Overview:** [Menopause - Overview - HSE.ie](http://www.hse.ie)
- **CIPD Menopause at Work:** [The menopause at work: A guide for people professionals | CIPD www.cipd.org/uk/topics/menopause/](http://www.cipd.org/uk/topics/menopause/)

12. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Council.

Policy Appendices:

- A. Template Record of Confidential Discussion and Agreed Supportive Arrangement
- B. Template Menopause in the Workplace Checklist

Appendix A - Record of Confidential Discussion and Agreed Supportive Arrangement

Confidential Discussion Template

Employee Details:

Name		Job title	
Department/ Section		Location	

Present at meeting (line manager name and position)	
Date of discussion	

Summary of Discussion

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Agreed Actions/Adjustments:

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Date of next review meeting:

Signed (Member of staff):

Signed (Manager):

Appendix B: Template Menopause in the Workplace Checklist

It's important that those experiencing menopause feel adequately supported and included in their working environments. The following is a useful checklist which outlines some best practice organisational initiatives that support an inclusive, diverse culture focused on wellbeing and performance.

	Yes/No	Actions
Does your organisation have a Menopause in the Workplace Policy?		
Has the Menopause in the Workplace Guidance Document been shared with all staff?		
Has your organisation held Menopause awareness sessions for both management and staff?		
Have all managers completed the Menopause in the Workplace eLearning Module?		
Do your managers have the right knowledge and skills to talk about menopause and to support colleagues who disclose they are experiencing menopausal symptoms?		
Have you communicated to all staff the following Central supports available to all: Education and Awareness: <i>[Council to include appropriate education/awareness information such as EAP Specialist Menopause Support webpage]</i>		
Does your organisation encourage access to one-to-one employee supports available through the EAP <i>[Council to amend as appropriate]</i>		

	Yes/No	Actions
<p>Is there flexibility in your organisation regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blended working• Shift patterns (if applicable)• Alternative tasks and duties		