

Winterwood Farms is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here.

Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, although for some individuals the transition can be difficult particularly in the context of the workplace. With the right support, it can be much better.

Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.

The company has a legal duty to make an assessment of the workplace risks to the health and safety of our employees. Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment will not exacerbate their symptoms. Often, making simple changes to the working environment can help to alleviate the impact of some symptoms

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers have a duty not to discriminate against employees with regard to their age and gender. If a woman experiences serious mental or physical impairment from menopause symptoms and, which have a substantial and long- term adverse effect on her ability to carry out day-to-day activities, this could be classed as a disability under the Equality Act.

Employees may be entitled to make a flexible working request – please see the company's flexible working policy.

Winterwood Farm has a zero tolerance of bullying or harassment so if an employee feels that have been mistreated by a colleague because of matters related to the menopause, please speak up.

Related stages of menopause.

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating, and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. Around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

All staff are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health.
 - Being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR.
 - If a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if they perceive their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to HR.
 - Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment.
 - Being willing to help and support their colleagues.
 - Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving because of their menopausal symptoms.

Line Managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally.
- Provide employees with support and guidance and sign post them to the information provided at Appendices 1 and 2.
- Document conversations and record any actions/adjustments required.
- Undertake a work-based risk assessment with the help of HR. This will be required on an individual basis due to the individual nature of menopause symptoms.
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:

- Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical.
- Update the action plan and continue to review.

APPENDIX 1 – Manager’s Guidance for Colleagues**Discussions**

We recognise that every woman is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- Record agreed actions, how to implement them and any next steps before the end of the meeting and ensure that all parties agree on what has been discussed. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential and is stored securely.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.

Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including as mentioned below. These symptoms can affect women at perimenopausal, menopausal and post-menopausal stages but support for women should be considered as detailed below:

Hot Flashes

- In an office - request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk or away from a heat source.
- In other working environments, allow access to cooler areas and if necessary, identify somewhere cool and discreet.
- Easy access to drinking water
- Have access to the social room or quiet space if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

Heavy/light Periods

- Have permanent access to washroom facilities or shower facilities (HR can provide the key for showers)
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- Sanitary products are available in toilets.
- If extra space is needed to store a change of clothes should be arranged.

Headaches

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water.
- Offer a quiet space to work.
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices.
- Have time-out to take medication if needed.

Difficulty Sleeping

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly suffering from a lack of sleep.

Low Mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions where this has been identified

- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly
- Review task allocation and workload
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment
- Offer quiet space to work
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices
- Reduce interruptions
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having ‘protected time’, so that they are not disturbed

Anxiety

- Promote counselling services and identify if Mental Health First Aiders can have regular catch-up sessions to check on wellbeing.
- Identify a ‘buddy’ for the colleague to talk to – outside of their work area
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Panic Attacks

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission
- Promote counselling services and identify if Mental Health First Aiders can have regular catch-up sessions to check on wellbeing.
- Identify a ‘buddy’ outside of work area
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.
- Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.
- If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

Support in attendance reviews and Bradford Factor scoring

Menopause is not inherently a disability, but it can be legally classified as one if symptoms have a substantial, long-term (12+ months) negative impact on daily activities. Under the [Equality Act 2010](#) (UK), such cases require employers to make reasonable adjustments and avoid discrimination.

Discuss an absence or stage work plan with employees with the support and guidance of HR. This may mean:

- Reduced hours to better manage symptoms

- Understanding that when symptoms emerge, open and honest discussion takes place.
- Not counting certain absences under [4.1.38 Attendance and absence review process](#).
- Review the Bradford Factor thresholds for the individual.

Understanding that individuals have different experiences

Individuals from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those within these communities. Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons; peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Appendix 2 Further information and support.

Further information can be found on the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/#>

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk> - An independent website which gives up-to-date information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk> - Provides the opportunity to chat to other women experiencing the same problems and concerns.

<https://thebms.org.uk> (British Menopause Society) - The BMS provides education, information and guidance to healthcare professionals specialising in all aspects of reproductive health.

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org> - WHC is the patient arm of the British Menopause Society and provides factsheets about the menopause, linked articles (e.g. about experiencing a healthy menopause), FAQs and recommended further reading.

<https://www.managemymenopause.co.uk> - A not for profit organisation providing tailored menopausal advice about post reproductive health.

<https://www.daisynetwork.org> - A registered charity providing free information and support to women with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) also known as Premature Menopause.

<https://simplyhormones.com> - Provides blogs and articles about the menopause and opportunity to sign up to receive free Menopause Survival Kit, newsletters and updates

<https://simplyhormones.com/mens-page/> - Information to help men understand more about the menopause, including some "helpful hints".

