



## **Menopause Guidance Policy**

### **Scope of Policy**

**Priory Medical Group** understands that for some affected members of its staff, the menopause and the time surrounding it can be a difficult and challenging time. It can have far reaching effects on, for example, the person's physical health, mental wellbeing, family relationships and performance at work impacting their daily lives considerably.

Therefore, the aim of this policy is to

- Raise awareness of menopause related issues at work and in particular assist managers in supporting staff who are experiencing menopause and associated symptoms and enable staff to access the support they need.
- Help foster an environment in which staff can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and how they can better support staff.
- Ensure that staff experiencing menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it — if they wish to — and ask for support so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- Enable staff to attend work and contribute their best whilst experiencing menopausal symptoms.

### **Definitions**

**Perimenopause** - the time leading up to menopause when changes may be experienced and sometimes severe associated menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause and is often when most support is required.

**Menopause** - when periods stop (for 12 months) and the end of the natural reproductive life is reached. Menopause usually occurs between 45 and 55 years old, with the average age being 51 however it can be earlier or later due to surgery, illness, or other reasons.

**Post menopause** - the time after menopause has occurred, starting when there has not been a period for 12 consecutive months.

### **Symptoms of menopause**

Not every individual will have every symptom or need help or support. However, 75% do experience some symptoms of which 25% could be classed as severe.

Some of the most typical symptoms of menopause include:

- **Psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration**
- **Sleeplessness**
- **Fatigue**
- **Hot flushes (sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck, and chest)**
- **Night sweats (hot flushes that happen during the night)**
- **Irregular periods and/or bleeding that is very heavy and unpredictable**
- **Muscle and joint stiffness, aches, and pains**
- **Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)**
- **Headaches**
- **Weight gain**
- **Palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable)**
- **Skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)**

### **Roles and responsibilities**

#### **Members of Staff**

All members of staff are responsible for:

- **Taking personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing, seeking medical advice if necessary.**
- **Being honest in conversations with managers/HR and Occupational Health.**
- **Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment.**
- **Being willing to support colleagues.**
- **Understanding any changes at work which have been agreed to support their colleagues as a result of menopausal symptoms.**

#### **Line managers**

All line managers are responsible for:

- **Familiarising themselves with the Menopause Guidance Policy.**

- Being ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating it sensitively and professionally.
- Considering, with the member of staff, how best they can be supported including any requests to accommodate changes at work that may be helpful to manage symptoms.
- Ensuring ongoing dialogue.
- Ensuring that agreed actions are implemented.

Where changes at work are accommodated but are unsuccessful or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the line manager may:

- Discuss and action a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.
- Review Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations (where reasonably practicable).
- Consider temporary changes to the work environment or working arrangements.
- Seek further advice from HR.

### **Occupational Health**

The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not menopause may be contributing to symptoms/impacting on health and wellbeing, providing advice and guidance in line with the latest research.
- Signpost managers and staff to appropriate sources of help and advice.
- Provide support to HR colleagues and line managers, advising on changes at work which may be considered.
- Monitor referrals due to menopausal symptoms and provide additional signposting if required.
- Provide summary reports of cases relating to menopausal symptoms.

### **Human Resources**

HR will:

- Offer guidance to line managers on the interpretation of this policy.
- Provide guidance to members of staff who have approached HR directly.
- Attend/participate in menopause training sessions where available.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect to related absence levels and performance.
- Signpost staff to counselling services and other relevant resources available.

### **Possible support or adjustments**

Some possible support or adjustments may include:

### **Flexible working arrangements**

Consideration of the following will be given for those experiencing severe symptoms:

- **Where the role permits, allow staff to work around their symptoms.**
- **Allowing time to rest and make the time up later.**
- **Permitting occasional home working when symptoms are severe if the role permits.**
- **Adjusting start and finish times.**
- **Flexibility around the taking of breaks or increased breaks during the working day.**
- **Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments.**
- **Changing/washing facilities.**
- **Allowance of regular breaks during meetings, especially longer meetings.**

### **Working environment**

Consideration of the following will be made:

- **Facilitating a more comfortable working environment, taking into account heating and lighting.**
- **Making desk fans easily available.**
- **Whether ventilation is sufficient or can be improved.**
- **Consideration of the proximity of washrooms.**

### **Uniforms**

Consideration of the following will be made:

- **Where uniforms are provided consider natural fibres where possible.**
- **Provision of additional uniforms.**
- **Adjustment of uniform requirements.**

### **Menopause and Equality Act 2010**

The menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. But if an employee or worker is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be discrimination if related to a protected characteristic, for example:

- **age**
- **disability**
- **gender reassignment**
- **sex**

If menopause symptoms amount to a disability, Priory Medical Group will be under a legal obligation to make any reasonable adjustments.

It might not always be obvious who is experiencing menopause symptoms. It's important for that we remember that the menopause affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle.

This can include some people who:

- **are transgender**
- **have variations in sex characteristics (VSC) – some people might use the terms intersex or differences in sex development (DSD)**
- **are non-binary – someone who's non-binary does not see themselves as exclusively a man or a woman**

We will support everyone equally and keep conversations confidential and private.

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| <b>Latest Review Date:</b>        | <b>Apr 2025</b>               |
| <b>Reviewed &amp; updated by:</b> | <b>Joanne Fox -HR Manager</b> |
| <b>Next Review:</b>               | <b>Apr 2026</b>               |