

Menopause Policy 2024

Applies to:

- All Employees (teaching and non-teaching), and the directors working in the School

Availability:

This policy is made available to Employees in the following ways:

- Via Teams, All Staff Shared Documents, Compliance, Policies
- On request a copy may be obtained from hr@radnor-sevenoaks.org

Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Head. The Board of Directors undertake a formal annual review of this policy.

Signed:



David Paton
Head



Dr Colin Diggory
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Date: January 2024

1. Introduction

Radnor House Sevenoaks is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works at the School, one in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity, and which protects employees' health, safety and welfare. The School acknowledges that transitioning through the menopause can be a difficult and stressful period, and it therefore actively encourages employees to discuss their menopausal symptoms and to ask for support and adjustments, if required. Whilst every woman does not suffer from symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

Employees can experience symptoms that can affect their work life and the School is therefore committed to supporting them, where possible, in practical and reasonable ways. Trans and non-binary employees who may be affected in the same or similar ways are covered by this policy. This policy sets out the support that the School may provide when an employee is affected by the menopause or is experiencing menopause-related symptoms.

This policy does not form part of the employment contract, and we may update it at any time.

This policy aims to:

- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and confidently instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause (should they so wish)
- Ensure everyone is clear about the support and reasonable adjustments that are available to employees
- Make line managers aware of the School's responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues and how they can affect employees and their work colleagues.
- Educate line managers about potential symptoms of the menopause and how they can support employees in the workplace.
- Raise wider awareness and understanding among employees.
- Reduce menopause-related sickness absence by supporting staff to remain at work.
- Assure women that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

2. Definitions and Symptoms

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for all women, although it can also be brought on as a result of other medical conditions or certain surgical interventions. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months, but it is best described as a "transition" rather than as a one-off event.

It is important to recognise that, for many reasons, the menopause affects women's physical and psychological health differently. Symptoms vary in type, amount, severity, and length between individuals. The menopause can often also indirectly affect individuals' partners, families, and work colleagues.

3. Stages of the Menopause

There are various stages to the menopause, as follows:

- Perimenopause (the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, which can last up to 5 years, and can include a variety of symptoms)
- Menopause (this usually occurs between the ages of 45-55, although around 1% do experience the menopause before the age of 40)
- Medical/surgical menopause. It is possible that ovaries can be damaged by treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery which can mean that the menopause can be experienced at any age, and for some the loss of fertility can be extremely hard to bear. In such circumstances, we should offer confidential counselling and emotional support via the Employee Assistance Programme, signposting to external services, and/or support via the Occupational Health Department.
- Those undergoing treatment for conditions such as endometriosis and infertility may experience menopausal symptoms whilst receiving treatment. The menopause can result in temporary psychological issues, such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, mood swings, irritability, issues with memory and loss of confidence. The School has a range of resources that may be helpful, which can be accessed via HR. Those resources can be helpful for employees experiencing the menopause, and for colleagues and managers wishing to increase their knowledge and understanding to enable them to support colleagues more effectively.

4. Recognise the symptoms:

The menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years. Everyone is different and some of the most typical symptoms include:

- Hot flushes
- Sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable.
- Night sweats
- Psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression
- Irregular periods
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches, and pains
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Headaches
- Weight gain
- Palpitations
- Skin changes
- Reduced sex drive
- Change in work performance

This list is by no means exhaustive.

5. Communication

The School aims to create an environment in which employees feel confident about raising issues about their menopausal symptoms and asking for additional support and adjustments at work. Many employees still see the menopause as a private and personal issue and, for some, discussing the transition into menopause can be a difficult subject to be open about. The School therefore seeks to promote a greater openness about, and understanding of, the menopause among line managers and staff, and the Board of Directors encourage the Head and the Leadership Team to create a supportive and understanding team culture that removes any barriers to employees disclosing information to them. We will do this by:

- Recording sickness absences that are related to the menopause as an ongoing medical issue rather than as a series of short-term sickness absences.
- Provide information to line managers so that they are knowledgeable to have open and sensitive conversations with employees about their menopausal symptoms (and how these might affect their work) and what they can do to support them.
- Treating the menopause in the same way as any other medical condition
- Putting in place measures to help employees better manage their symptoms, leading to a reduction in sickness absence and an increase in wellbeing and productivity.
- Reminding staff to support their work colleagues, not to make inappropriate comments or jokes and to respect any adjustments put in place to help them with their symptoms.

6. Procedure for Employees to notify or reach out to the School

- Speak to your GP or medical specialist about any menopause-related concerns as a good place to start.
- An employee can speak to their line manager, or you can speak directly to HR by requesting a Welfare Form.
- Once the Welfare Form has been returned, HR will respond within the next day with an acknowledgement and will request an informal meeting. The email will also provide information to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- The informal meeting will be a confidential and open discussion where the employee can talk openly about their situation and discuss what help and support, they would like to support them while working. HR will create a wellness action plan which will be shared with you with timescales of when they will be in place.
- Meet on a semi regular basis (termly or every six months) to check symptoms are being managed effectively. Symptoms of menopause can fluctuate over time, so both parties should arrange regular follow-up discussions to ensure that the support and adjustments provided still meet their needs.

7. Adjustments

Members of the School (Head, Leadership Team and Line Managers) should apply individual discretion when assessing an employee's particular needs and circumstances and should act accordingly. Information about an employee's menopausal symptoms should be treated as confidential. Line managers should expressly agree with the employee which (if any) work colleagues should be informed, by whom and on what basis.

The School is committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate support and, where possible, adjustments are put in place. The School also recognises that the menopause is a very individual experience and that employees can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

These may include:

- Adjusting workplace temperatures
- Improving ventilation
- Ensuring windows can be safely opened
- Providing fans
- Providing easy access to cold drinking water, restrooms and toilet/washroom facilities
- Consider temporary flexible working arrangements, where possible
- Re-assessing work allocation, where possible
- Making sure employees can take toilet and rest breaks
- Establishing a system that allows cover for women who need to access toilet/ washing facilities while they are teaching (to deal with heavy and recurring bleeding)
- Ensure that a range of products are placed in staff toilets, to ensure employees can manage emergency situations discreetly.
- Permitting time off for attendance at medical appointments
- Being flexible when applying the School's performance management, attendance or disciplinary procedures
- Referring the employee to resources and support available

When seeking solutions, risk assessments and wellness action plans can assist in enabling the individual's specific needs and issues to be fully considered and potential options explored. Radnor House appreciate that risk assessments and wellness action plans will be individual and specific to the person and their circumstances.

8. Resources

There are a number of specialist organisations who can offer support to individuals before, during and after the menopause, including the following:

- The School's Employee Assistance Programme can provide specialist and confidential advice and counselling 24/7 and menopause resources can be accessed via their website (details available from HR)
- NHS Guidance on Menopause provides comprehensive advice on symptoms and treatment options available: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause
- Menopause Exchange Helpline can be contacted at 020 8420 7245 and their newsletters provide information and advice: www.menopause-exchange.co.uk
- Education Support provides support 24/7 at 08000 562561 or via text at 07909341229. Useful resources can be accessed at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/blogs/teaching-and-menopause>
- British Menopause Society provides a wealth of information and guides on the menopause and all aspects of post-reproductive health: thebms.org.uk. This is primarily aimed at health care professionals and the Women's Health Concern is the patient arm of the British The Education

Alliance Menopause Policy v1.3 Page 6 of 8 Menopause Society providing factsheets, articles, FAQs and further reading links: www.womens-health-concern.org

- Daisy Network is a charitable organisation providing support and guidance for all experiencing premature menopause: www.daisynetwork.org.uk
- Menopause Matters provides easily accessible information about the menopause, including treatments available and what steps to take: www.menopausematters.co.uk
- Menopause Café is a discussion group to gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause in a friendly and easily accessible way: www.menopausecafe.net
- Henpicked is an online community providing 'lunch and learn' videos with industry-wide experts: www.henpicked.net
- Simply Hormones provides blogs and articles about the menopause and the opportunity to sign up to receive a free menopause survival kit, newsletters and updates: www.simplyhormones.com
- Simply Hormones – Menopause: A Guide for Men provides information and helpful hints to help men understand more about the menopause: www.simplyhormones.com/men-and-the-menopause
- www.theros.co.uk – this is the Royal Osteoporosis Society, with information including factsheets and information regarding bone health, fitness and activity.
- www.managemymenopause.co.uk – this provides expert advice on the menopause.
- www.thebms.org.uk – this is the British Menopause Society, and it has a range of information, including how to find a specialist.
- www.themenopauseSchool.com – menstruation to menopause training. Support and information can also be provided by the HR Department.