

TENBURY TOWN COUNCIL



Menopause Policy

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Tenbury Town Council is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive working environment for all staff.
- 1.2 The Council therefore recognises that female employees may need support during the menopause, particularly as the menopause is not a widely discussed subject and can be misunderstood. The menopause can also impact trans and non-binary people who may not identify as female.
- 1.3 The Council has a positive attitude to the issue and will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments where necessary to support staff experiencing the menopause.
- 1.4 It also wants to develop a culture where the menopause is openly discussed in a respectful and supportive manner as the changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work, with three out of four women experiencing symptoms and one in four could experience serious symptoms.
- 1.5 Some women may find it difficult to discuss the menopause and may feel that they need to take time off work to deal with their symptoms without discussing the reason. This policy aims to raise awareness about the menopause and provide guidance to understand more about the menopause.
- 1.6 Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55. However, some start experiencing symptoms much earlier. Often, symptoms last between four to eight years but they can continue for longer.
- 1.7 Under the Equalities Act, menopause discrimination is largely covered under three protected characteristics: age, sex and disability discrimination. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 provides for safe working, which extends to the working conditions when experiencing menopause symptoms.
- 1.8 The changes affect women in different ways with some experience few or no symptoms, others experience mild to severe symptoms. Recognising these changes can help in making the links between workplace health and safety and the problems some women experience working through the menopause.
- 1.9 The effects of the menopause should be considered in any relevant capability performance or issues as it is recognised that the physical and psychological symptoms of the menopause and side effects of hormone replacement therapy may have a detrimental impact on work performance.
- 1.10 The menopause is preceded by the perimenopause, during which the body prepares itself for menopause. The perimenopause can also last several

years and can involve similar symptoms to the menopause itself. For this policy, any reference to the menopause includes the perimenopause.

2.0 Menopause

- 2.1 The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for women. It refers to the time when menstruation has ceased for 12 consecutive months. This occurs naturally between the ages of 45 and 55. Overall, this period of hormonal change and associated symptoms can last from four to eight years. When menopause occurs before the age of 40, it is considered early. Early menopause can be caused by medical treatments, or it can just happen naturally.
- 2.2 The menopause occurs in all women and begins when the ovaries spontaneously fail to produce the hormones, particularly oestrogen and progesterone. The resulting low and changing levels of hormones, particularly oestrogen, are thought to be the cause of menopausal symptoms in many women.
- 2.3 Menopause is usually a natural process involving gradual change, sometimes it can be sudden and acute resulting from medical intervention.
- 2.4 Symptoms associated with the menopause include hot flushes, heavy periods, urinary problems, palpitations, panic attacks, night sweats and sleep disturbance, fatigue, poor concentration, poor memory, irritability, mood disturbance, skin irritation, anxiety attacks, depression, muscle and joint pains, memory loss, dryness of the skin and eyes. Not every woman will experience all these symptoms and they may not occur continuously.
- 2.5 The changes in oestrogen levels can result in intermittent symptoms around this time including hot flushes, sweating, increased susceptibility to anxiety, fatigue and stress and memory loss.
- 2.6 Hormonal changes associated with the menopause can affect a woman's future health as well as her experience of menopausal symptoms. Some women require medical advice and treatment such as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Seeking medical advice about menopause-related symptoms may require time off work to attend medical appointments and/or treatment.
- 2.7 Women experiencing the menopause may encounter difficulties at work because of their symptoms. Some women find themselves feeling less confident as result of their symptoms and tiredness and night sweats can make women more susceptible to fatigue and work-related stress.
- 2.8 Women can be affected in different ways but workplace factors that can make working life difficult for women experiencing the menopause include:
 - Lack of awareness of the menopause.
 - Poor ventilation and air quality.

- Inadequate access to drinking water.
- Inadequate toilet access and inflexible break times.
- Negative attitudes.
- Unsympathetic management.
- Excessive demands and stress.

2.9 Menopause is not just an issue for women. All staff and Councillors should be aware of the menopause so that they can support those going through it or otherwise affected by it.

3.0 Support

3.1 It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different levels of support may be needed. As with all longstanding health-related conditions, the Council is aware that sympathetic and appropriate support is required to help deal with the issues arising from the menopause.

3.2 The Council is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and wellbeing of those going through the menopause. Adjustments may be necessary to support women who are experiencing the menopause.

3.3 Working time arrangements should be flexible enough to ensure they meet the needs of menopausal women, who may at times require access to more flexible working to deal with their symptoms, including starting later after difficulties sleeping, needing to leave work suddenly or take more breaks during the day.

3.4 Consideration should be given to environmental factors. Issues that have been highlighted as useful among the general working population include temperature and ventilation controls, such as the use of fans.

3.5 Adjustments may be required to the employee's duties as hot flushes can be more difficult to cope with when undertaking high visibility work such as formal presentations and formal meetings for example.

3.6 Consideration should be given regarding access to chilled drinking water as access to adequate workplace sanitary facilities.

3.7 These are examples only and not an exhaustive list.

3.8 The Council encourages an environment in which colleagues can have open conversations about the menopause. The Council expect staff and Councillors to be supportive of staff who may be affected by the menopause in the workplace.

3.9 Anyone affected by menopause should feel confident to talk about their symptoms and the support they may need to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause them at work. Such conversations should be treated sensitively and any information provided should be handled confidentially.

4.0 Self Help

4.1 Current health promotion advice to women highlights the importance of lifestyle choices before, during and after the menopause and the benefits of:

- Eating healthily and regularly.
- Having access to natural light.
- Getting adequate rest and relaxation.
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Exercising regularly to maintain aerobic fitness levels.
- Obtaining support and discussing symptoms.
- Not smoking
- Consulting with their GP on the management of the menopause and to ensure any symptoms are not due to any other cause.
- Ensuring alcohol intake is at, or below, recommended levels.

4.2 These can help with some symptoms of menopause and may also help the risks of other conditions in later life.

5.0 Sources of Further Advice and Guidance

- Menopause Matters <https://menopausematters.co.uk>
- The Daisy Network (supporting women who experience premature menopause) <https://www.dasiynetwork.org.uk>
- The Hysterectomy Association <https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk>
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. These explain how your GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer you. You can find more information by using the following link <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>
- The National Health Service provides an overview of menopause. <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- Menopause information – The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information in a dedicated area of their website at: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause>
- Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) information and support on very early menopause. You can find out more at <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>

- Henpicked. This site provides information on managing menopause and an insight into women's stories see <https://henpicked.net/menopause>
- The British Menopause Society (BMS), established in 1989, educates, informs and guides healthcare professionals in all aspects of post reproductive health. This is achieved through an annual programme of lectures, conferences, meetings, exhibitions and our interactive website. They offer a range of publications including a quarterly journal. <https://thebms.org.uk>