

Periods and Menopause in the Workplace

We promote an inclusive environment where employees can openly engage in conversation relating to health and wellbeing.

We have recently signed the Menopause Workplace Pledge. The pledge, organised by the Wellbeing of Women charity, calls on signatories to recognise the impact that the menopause can have on employees. Employees may often have difficulty managing symptoms within the workplace and can feel embarrassed and unable to disclose their menopausal status, fearing they may be stigmatised for being menopausal.

Becoming a signatory of the [Menopause Workplace Pledge](#) demonstrates our commitment to support employees in the workplace including helping to generate more conversations between Managers and employees.

As part of the [Health and Wellbeing Framework](#), employees should feel encouraged and supported to discuss anything that may have an impact on their health and wellbeing, when they feel the need to. Therefore, it is important that Managers and employees have an awareness of periods and menopausal symptoms to support employees and work proactively to make reasonable adjustments as necessary.

It should be noted that people who identify as non-binary, transgender and intersex may also experience symptoms of menstruating and the menopause.

Definitions

[Periods](#)

A period is part of the menstrual cycle where bleeding occurs. Periods can last between 3 and 8 days and most commonly happen every 28 days, however it is worth noting that for some individuals these may be more irregular and last longer than average.

Changes in body hormone levels before a period can cause physical and emotional changes, and this is known as PMS (premenstrual syndrome) or PMT (premenstrual tension).

There are many possible [symptoms of PMS](#), including:

- Abdominal and/or pelvic cramping
- Lower back pain
- Mood swings and irritability
- Headaches
- Fatigue/tiredness
- And in some cases, can lead to anaemia

Menopause

The Menopause is a natural stage of life which affects those who have a menstrual cycle. There are different stages of the menopause that can be medically complicated and vary from person to person. The table below contains definitions of the types and stages of menopause.

Term	Definition
Menopause	Menopause means the 'last menstrual cycle' and individuals are said to have reached the menopause when there hasn't been a period for 12 consecutive months. The menopause usually occurs between 45 and 55 but for some it can be earlier or later.
Early Menopause	Menopause occurring between the ages of 40 and 45.
Perimenopause	The phase leading up to the menopause, when ovulation cycles and periods can be irregular, continuing until 12 months after the final period. This usually begins during the mid-40s but can start as early as twenties.
Post menopause	This is the time after the menopause has occurred, starting when there has not been a period for twelve consecutive months. For many the symptoms will not end at this stage and can continue, for a further 4 years (average), however it is worth noting that for some this may continue for up to 12 years.
Premature menopause	Occurs under the age of 40 and is also known as premature ovarian insufficiency (POI).
Medical or surgical menopause	Can occur suddenly when the ovaries are removed (e.g. oophorectomy or hysterectomy) or damaged by specific treatments (e.g. chemotherapy or radiotherapy).

All the above can have a significant impact on daily life for some employees and they may wish to seek medical advice from their GP to understand their symptoms and how they can be managed.

Symptoms

Menopause [symptoms](#) can be physical, psychological and emotional and can vary between individuals. Some of the most common symptoms include:

- Hot flushes and/or sweats
- Headaches/migraines
- Anxiety and/or panic attacks
- Irregular periods
- Difficulty sleeping/Insomnia
- Poor concentration/memory issues (brain fog)
- Irritability and/or mood swings

Employees who may be indirectly affected by the menopause

Managers should be aware that employees can be indirectly affected by their partners menopause, which could have an impact on their performance at work for

example, if an employee's partner is experiencing significant physical, psychological and/or emotional symptoms such as depression, insomnia or mood swings.

Responsibilities

[Health and Wellbeing](#) is everyone's responsibility - we all have a role to play.

Coping with symptoms in the workplace can be hard, as many employees find it difficult to talk about menopause at work. This short video about having a [Wellbeing Conversation](#) may help when having a sensitive conversation.

As an **employee**, you are expected to:

- Take reasonable care of your own health and wellbeing
- Raise any concerns you have with your line manager
- Openly and honestly discuss any reasonable adjustments needed
- Seek medical advice from your GP if symptoms begin to affect your ability to carry out your role

As a **line manager** of an employee experiencing periods or menopausal symptoms at work or of a partner or colleague impacted by the experiences of another, you are expected to:

- Have open and honest discussions about health and wellbeing.
- Provide opportunities for discussions, such as one to one conversations
- Discuss reasonable adjustments
- Don't make assumptions about symptoms, as no one personal experience is the same
- Seek advice from HR or Occupational Health, as required

As a **colleague** of an employee experiencing period or menopausal symptoms at work, you are expected to:

- Support colleagues
- Understand any reasonable adjustments that may be put in place to support an employee as a result of period-related or menopausal symptoms

Reasonable Adjustments

Simple changes to an employee's role or working environment can help ensure that period or menopausal symptoms do not become a barrier to performance or attendance at work.

Several practical solutions can be implemented to ensure the working environment is more comfortable:

- Check if windows can be opened for more ventilation
- A temporary change to the seating plan
- Desk fans
- A short walk outside when necessary
- Reduce work pressure by recognising challenging situations, and discussing how these can be avoided or managed differently to minimise pressure.
- Discuss temporary [flexible working](#) – such as changes to start/finish times, working pattern or occasional/regular homeworking (if available)
- Access to change/shower facilities where available

This list is not exhaustive nor does it provide a ‘one-size’ solution, everyone’s experience including their symptoms, will be different.

As a line manager, it is important to listen to those experiencing either periods or menopausal symptoms and respond sympathetically to any requests for adjustments at work.

Other Sources of Information and Support

For further support and advice, please contact Human Resources on HR@pkc.gov.uk

Or check out the following sources of support:

- [NHS](#) – Periods; PMS (premenstrual syndrome); Period problems
- [Reusable Menstrual Products](#)
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine - [Guidance on menopause and the workplace](#)
- NHS Inform – [Menopause and the workplace](#)
- [NHS – Menopause overview](#)
- CIPD – [Guide for Line Managers – Managing Menopause at Work](#)
- [CIPD – Menopause Leaflet](#)
- [Menopause Matters](#) – Diet, Exercise & Lifestyle
- Menopause café - [Gather to eat cake, drink and discuss menopause \(menopausecafe.net\)](#)

- The [Daisy Network](#) is dedicated to providing information and support to women diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency, also known as Premature Menopause.
- [Women's Wellbeing Club – Perth](#) – Is a peer to peer community support group run for women by volunteers. #TogetherStronger
- [Wellbeing of Women](#) – Menopause Workplace Pledge – taking positive action to ensure everyone going through the menopause is supported