

**Menopause Policy**

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1 **What is Menopause and who does it affect?**

* 1. The menopause is a natural event and occurs for most women between the ages of 45-55, although some experience this change prior to reaching the age of 40.
  2. Women will encounter hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels, and their periods will cease. This usually takes place over a period of four to eight years and will vary, dependant on the individual, but in some cases could last up to 12 years.
  3. The process begins with a ‘perimenopause’, which is the beginning of the change cycle, when a woman’s body begins to prepare for the menopause. The usual timescale for this occurring is usually mid-forties but could be earlier/later and could last for several years.
  4. An Early Menopause is not the same process as ‘perimenopause’. Early Menopause is when a women’s periods cease before the age of 45, either naturally or as a result of side effect from certain treatments. Management should be aware that occasionally this situation has additional complications for the individual, and they may need further support/adjustments.

1.4.1 **Causes of early menopause**

* + - 1. The ovaries stop working. It is often unknown as to why this happens, but could be related to:
* chromosome abnormalities, such as Turners Syndrome
* An autoimmune disease, where body tissues are attacked by the immune system
* Specific infections such as Mumps (rare), Malaria and Tuberculosis
* Medical History of family, genetic issues (relatives experiencing this in early twenties/thirties).

1.4.1.2 Cancer Treatment

* Certain cancer treatments such as Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy can cause either permanent or temporary premature ovarian failure. This also is impacted by factors such as age, area of body undergoing treatment (more severe for brain or pelvis in radiology situations) and the type of treatment being given (different types of chemotherapy may affect the ovaries differently).

1.4.1.3 Ovarian Surgery

* Surgery to remove both ovaries or a hysterectomy will also bring on premature or early menopause.

1.4.2 **Symptoms of Early Menopause**

* Difficulty sleeping
* Problems with memory and concentration
* Hot flushes/higher temperature at times
* Personal discomfort

1. **What are the symptoms of Menopause?**
   1. During the final two years of Perimenopause, women may start to experience menopausal symptoms. The symptoms can vary greatly (and this list is not exhaustive), but commonly include:

* Fatigue
* Memory Loss
* Headaches
* Dizziness
* Anxiety
* Recurrent UTI infections
* Heavy Periods
* Hot flushes
* Aches and pains/joint inflammation
* Excessive sweating
  1. Ladies suffering with any of these symptoms, may have impacted work performance, increased absence periods and well-being issues. It will also affect the comfort of these employees in the workplace and Lambeth as a responsible employer, must ensure that we are supporting employees if they are experiencing hormonal challenges.

3 **Management and Reasonable Adjustments in the workplace**

3.1 Managers have an important role in the ongoing welfare of their direct reports, and there are lots of ways that they can be supportive in relation to Menopause.

* Regular 1:1’s to check on employees' welfare, including willingness to have open, professional and sensitive discussions with colleagues and to ensure confidentiality is maintained.
* Ensuring adjustments that are highlighted by the employee/health professionals are implemented, where this is reasonable and practicable. (E.g. Fans, temperature control and access to a local rest room)
* Adjusting employees work schedule or being more flexible – start or finish times, via application of Smarter Flexibility Policy
* Informal Flexible Working Requests through differing work pattern/hours
* Adjusting tasks and workload (if applicable within service)
* Referrals to Health and Safety (where support is required in relation to equipment/wellbeing)
* Referral to Occupational Health (for further medical support needs) and flexibility around additional medical appointments that may be required by the individual
* Providing information on the Employee Assistance Helpline
* Correctly recording instances of sickness on Oracle, referencing menopause and ensuring normal sickness procedure applies. Sometimes it may not be appropriate to pursue formal procedures where an employee has long term issues around Menopause and may need additional medical referrals (seeking advice from HR as appropriate).

**4 Additional external support available**

* Healthassuredeap.com (Employee Assistance Helpline)
* <https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/treatment/>
* <https://www.managemymenopause.co.uk/>
* <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
* <https://archive.acas.org.uk/menopause>