



HEARTS ACADEMY TRUST

# Menopause Guidance

**Date reviewed:** May 2024

**Next date to be reviewed:** May 2027

HEARTS Academy Trust is committed to providing a happy, caring and safe learning environment for all within a value led context, where everyone feels valued and grows in confidence and independence.

We promote **HAPPINESS** through a creative, exciting and practical curriculum, which generates a love of, and interest in, learning and a resilience and hope which supports us through challenging times.

Great value is placed on pupils' self **ESTEEM** which is developed through a positive and motivated attitude to learning, a healthy lifestyle, good social skills, self-discipline and a positive self-image.

We promote the highest standards of **ACHIEVEMENT** in all areas of the curriculum and help all pupils to fulfil their potential regardless of gender, race or ability.

We foster **RESPECT and RESPONSIBILITY** for all by establishing good relations between the school, home and community. Pupils are taught respect for themselves, others and the environment. They are also taught to take full responsibility for their own choices and responsibility for themselves and their community.

We encourage **TRUTH** and honesty in all aspects of school life – relationships, work and the curriculum and learn to trust and accept others' individuality and uniqueness.

We develop **SPIRITUALITY and SERVICE** so that calm, quiet, reflective times which support deep thought are part of school life and beauty is appreciated. We promote a service culture that reflects our duty to support and show compassion to all members of the community and not just ourselves.



*Children at the HEART*

## **1. Introduction**

HEARTS Academy Trust recognises the importance of supporting colleagues who experience menopausal symptoms and are committed to ensuring that appropriate adjustments and additional support are available to help colleagues feel comfortable at work.

This guidance recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that colleagues may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause. At HEARTS Academy Trust, we recognise that there are no rules in relation to the age at which individuals start the menopause – those raising the possibility will be taken seriously, regardless of age.

The HEARTS Academy Trust has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect and ensure that the workplace does not make symptoms worse. HEARTS Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that colleagues feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely in the organisation.

HEARTS Academy Trust aims, as part of our desire to create an open, inclusive and understanding culture, to increase awareness of menopause and the impact it has on individuals' lives.

## **2. The legislative setting**

The HEARTS Academy Trust undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below:

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake general risk assessments which should include specific risks to menopausal colleagues.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

## **3. Status**

This document sets out guidance for members of staff and managers to follow in providing the right support to those experiencing menopausal symptoms at work.

## **4. Aims**

1. To encourage an environment in which colleagues can, if they wish, have open conversations about the menopause. We expect everyone to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by the menopause in the workplace.
2. To ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place, recognising that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution.
3. To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

## 5. What steps will we take as an employer?

The HEARTS Academy Trust will share this guidance with line managers and staff to enable them to be aware of how the menopause can affect colleagues, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support those experiencing them. This includes finding ways to educate colleagues about the menopause and how to recognise its onset. Managers need to feel empowered to raise the possibility with staff in a way that is sensitive and well-intended

While many who go through menopause will be able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of menopausal symptoms on their work. If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your manager in the first instance. Experiencing menopausal symptoms can be a sensitive and personal matter and as such, some individuals may not wish to discuss with their manager initially. In these circumstances, please speak in confidence to a Trust Senior Leader or a trusted colleague instead.

A Risk Assessment will consider the specific needs of colleagues experiencing menopausal symptoms, and, in doing so, we will work with the member of staff to write a specific Risk Assessment for their needs, securing agreement from the member of staff prior to sharing the Risk Assessment with their direct Line Manager, requesting signatures to confirm that measures are understood and will be acted upon. Risk assessments will include consideration of temperature control and ventilation issues (thermometers may be needed) and will also address welfare issues; such as access to toilet facilities and cold water, during and outside break and lunch times. ***See Appendix 4 for an example Risk Assessment, please note that this is a template of a person-centred risk assessment.***

The HEARTS Academy Trust will make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. These could include simple measures such as:

- leaving doors open where safe to do so
- ensuring that windows can be safely opened
- ensuring that it is possible to regulate the temperature in a classroom or other room by turning down radiators (as long as the temperature does not drop below 18 degrees Celsius, this will be comfortable for all occupants)
- provision of fans
- establishing a system that allows cover to those who need to access toilet facilities while they are teaching and ensuring that sanitary disposal bins are available in toilets
- considering requests for changes to working arrangements, locally at each school, any such arrangements are to be detailed in the Risk Assessment
- swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments
- adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to colleagues experiencing menopause symptoms

This is not a definitive list of measures. The HEARTS Academy Trust will actively listen to staff and governors and take on board other suggestions.

It is recognised that many of these practical and easy-to-institute changes to the workplace, which will make working life more bearable for menopausal colleagues, will benefit all staff.

The HEARTS Academy Trusts Senior Mental Health lead is available to listen and talk to any member of staff who feels they would benefit from this offering.

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

It is recognised that everyone who works at The HEARTS Academy Trust has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all staff, including those experiencing the menopause.

### **6.1 All staff are responsible for:**

- taking responsibility for looking after their health
- being open and honest in conversations with HR and Occupational Health
- contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment
- being willing to help and support their colleagues
- accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

### **6.2 Line managers**

The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen and, wherever possible, respond sympathetically to any requests for adjustments at work.

#### **6.2.1 All line managers will:**

- familiarise themselves with this menopause guidance
- be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance; if someone's performance suddenly dips, consideration will be given as to whether the menopause may be playing a part in this
- provide a safe place to allow the member of staff to speak openly and honestly
- be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially and allowing adequate time for the discussion
- record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented, via an action plan
- ensure ongoing dialogue via a follow-up meeting
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to and reviewed as regularly as necessary
- recognise their responsibility to make it clear that any measure put in place to support colleagues during this difficult stage in their life in no way reflects their judgment of their ability to do the job well - there is no link between this support and capability action plans.

#### **6.2.2 Where adjustments are unsuccessful or if symptoms are proving particularly severe, the line manager may:**

- discuss with the employee a referral to Occupational Health for further advice
- review Occupational Health advice, and implement any additional recommendations
- update the action plan and continue the review process

### **6.3 Occupational Health**

The role of Occupational Health is to:

- carry out a holistic assessment of the employee to ascertain whether or not working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms
- discuss with the employee what adjustments would help
- signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice

## 7. External support (specialist agencies and charities)

[www.neu.org.uk/menopause](http://www.neu.org.uk/menopause)

[www.nasuwf.org.uk](http://www.nasuwf.org.uk)

[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

[www.thebms.org.uk](http://www.thebms.org.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms)

[Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)

[Manage My Menopause | Tailored menopausal advice provided by experts in post-reproductive health](#)

[Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)

[Gather to eat cake, drink and discuss menopause \(menopausecafe.net\)](#)

[Home - Henpicked](#)

[Balance - Homepage \(balance-menopause.com\)](#)

## 8. How can you stay healthy during the menopause?

8.1 We encourage you to speak with your GP to determine if you are experiencing the menopause and to explore what treatment/medication may be suitable for you to help ease your symptoms. There are checklists available such as the Henpicked Colleague support pack which can help prepare you for these conversations.

8.2 There are also other ways to ensure you look after your physical health as you go through the changes that menopause brings:

- Eat a balanced diet
- Refrain from smoking
- Limit alcohol intake
- Exercise regularly

## 9 Support for managers and colleagues

9.1 It is important that everyone within HEARTS Academy Trust is aware of this guidance and understands the practical steps that can be taken to support a colleague who is experiencing menopause.

9.2 What you should do:

- Make yourself and your team familiar with this document and our internal and external sources of support
- Attend webinars or other training we provide on the menopause
- Create an environment where individuals feel comfortable disclosing health issues i.e. make conversations about wellbeing standard in one-to-one meetings and try and raise awareness of the menopause generally in your team to help breakdown the stigma and embarrassment some people feel about the topic
- Ensure you listen to the needs of each individual and be open to having discussions about the menopause, ensuring confidentiality where requested
- You may find that an individual chooses not to initially discuss their symptoms with you, try not to take this to heart and remain open to a discussion when/if they feel ready to talk
- Be aware that some individuals may seek to downplay symptoms, so encourage an open and honest discussion where appropriate

- If an individual does inform you that they are suffering with menopausal symptoms, then work with them to ensure the right support is provided. The menopause and the symptoms associated with it, should be treated as a long-term health issue, if you are not sure about what options of support are available, speak with your line manager in the first instance.
- Ensure that you check-in regularly with the individual to review the effectiveness of any support measures put in place and make any changes as necessary

9.3 Treat all conversations about the menopause sensitively and handle all information disclosed confidentially and in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy

9.4 What you shouldn't do:

- Make assumptions about the menopause and how this may be affecting the individual
- Shy away from talking about the menopause
- Share personal information that has been disclosed to you without consent
- Provide medical or personal advice where it is not wanted
- Try to refrain from making decisions for the individual; instead signpost relevant help and agree together how to move forward

9.5 Example questions to ask:

- What symptoms are you experiencing?'
- How are these symptoms affecting you day to day/at work?
- What are you already doing to try and manage this?
- What other ways can we help you at work in managing these symptoms?

## **10 Data protection**

10.1 HEARTS Academy Trust will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

## **Appendix 1: Definitions**

### **Menopause**

The menopause is a natural health event for most women and some trans men, non-binary and intersex people, that usually takes place in-between 40 and 55 years of age (the average age in the UK is 51), during which they have not had a period for 12 months and experience hormonal changes. It can also happen earlier or later. For many people, symptoms usually last about four years, but in some cases can last longer, sometimes up to 12 years.

### **Perimenopause**

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 the purpose of this document, any reference to the menopause includes the perimenopause. The perimenopause is not the same as premature menopause.

### **Post-menopausal**

Post-menopause is the time after menopause. A person who is post-menopausal may still experience menopausal symptoms for years to come.

### **Symptoms of the menopause**

Symptoms may include:

#### Vasomotor Symptoms

\*Hot flushes and Night Sweats and difficulty sleeping

#### Psychological effects of hormone changes

\*Low mood/mood swings/depression

\*Poor memory and concentration

\*Insomnia

\*Anxiety/panic attacks

#### Physical Symptoms

- Dizziness
- Headaches/migraines

\*Fatigue

\*Joint stiffness, aches and pains

\*Palpitations

\*Formication (creeping skin)

\*Irregular and/or heavy periods

Dry eyes

Recurrent urinary tract infections

#### Consequences of oestrogen deficiency

\*Obesity, diabetes

\*Heart disease

\*Osteoporosis/chronic arthritis

\*Dementia and cognitive decline

\*Cancer

N.B. This is not an exhaustive list.



## **Appendix 2: Management guidance for supportive, informal discussions**

Managers should familiarise themselves with the menopause before conducting a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their situation. The menopause is a natural part of ageing which usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age. Menopause can happen naturally, or for reasons such as surgery to remove ovaries (oophorectomy) or the uterus (hysterectomy), cancer treatments like chemotherapy, or genetic reason. Sometimes the reason is unknown.

### **Line managers**

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Line managers should seek to provide appropriate support and adjustments when needed to help colleagues deal with issues arising from the menopause.

Should an employee request a meeting to discuss concerns of the menopause, it is recommended that line managers adhere to the following:

- Arrange a meeting at a convenient time for both parties;
- Allow the employee to be accompanied if they want it. This can be a trade union representative or a colleague;
- Choose a venue that provides privacy and is unlikely to be disturbed;
- Allow adequate time to talk;
- Encourage the employee to be open and honest. It is difficult to help when you haven't got the full picture;
- If the employee wishes to speak to another manager, this should be allowed;
- Keep a note of all discussions and agree outcomes and next steps;
- Agree a follow-up meeting to review the situation.

### Appendix 3: Workplace concerns and suggested adjustments

Symptom	Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms	Suggested adjustments
Daytime sweats, hot flushes, palpitations	Lack of access to rest breaks or suitable break areas. Hot flushes and facial redness may cause individuals to feel self-conscious, or the sensation may affect concentration or train of thought.	Be flexible about additional breaks. Allow time out and access to fresh air. Ensure a quiet area/room is available. Ensure cover is available so workers can leave their posts if needed.
Night time sweats and hot flushes. Insomnia or sleep disturbance	Rigid start/finish times and lack of flexible working options may increase fatigue at work due to lack of sleep.	Consider temporary adjustment of hours to accommodate any difficulties. Allow flexible working. Provide the option of alternative tasks/duties. Make allowance for potential additional need for sickness absence. Reassure workers that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets.
Urinary problems; for example, increased frequency, urgency, and increased risk of urinary infections	Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and an increase in stress levels. Staff member may need to access toilet facilities more frequently, may need to drink more fluids and may feel unwell.	Ensure easy access to toilet facilities. Allow for more frequent breaks during work to go to the toilet. Ensure easy access to supply of cold drinking water. Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day. Make allowances for potential additional need for sickness absence.
Irregular and/or heavy periods	Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and an increase in stress levels. Staff member may need to access toilet and washroom facilities more frequently.	Ensure easy access to well-maintained toilet facilities. Allow for more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet. Ensure sanitary products are readily available in female toilets. Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day. Ensure cover is available so staff can leave their posts if needed.
Skin irritation, dryness or itching	Unsuitable workplace temperatures and humidity may increase skin irritation, dryness and itching. There may be discomfort, an increased risk of infection and a reduction in the barrier function of skin.	Ensure comfortable working temperatures and humidity. Ensure easy access to well-maintained facilities.
Muscular aches and bone and joint pains	Lifting and moving, as well as work involving repetitive movements or adopting static postures, may be more uncomfortable and there may be an increased risk of injury.	Make any necessary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules/tasks and keep under review. Consider providing alternative lower-risk tasks.

Symptom	Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms	Suggested adjustments
		Follow Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and advice on manual handling and preventing MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders).
Headaches	Headaches may be triggered or worsened by many workplace factors such as artificial lighting, poor air quality, exposure to chemicals, screen work, workplace stress, poor posture/unsuitable workstations, unsuitable uniforms or workplace temperatures.	Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality. Ensure access to natural light and ability to adjust artificial light. Allow additional rest breaks. Ensure a quiet area/room is available. Carry out Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and stress risk assessments.
Dry eyes	Unsuitable workplace temperatures/humidity, poor air quality and excessive screen work may increase dryness in the eyes, discomfort, eye strain and increase the risk of infection.	Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality. Allow additional breaks from screen-based work. Carry out DSE risk assessments.
Psychological symptoms, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Panic Attacks</li> <li>• Mood changes</li> <li>• Loss of confidence</li> </ul>	Excessive workloads, unsupportive management and colleagues, perceived stigma around the menopause, bullying and harassment and any form of work-related stress may exacerbate symptoms. Stress can have wide-ranging negative effects on mental and physical health and wellbeing. Performance and workplace relationships may be affected.	Carry out a stress risk assessment and address work-related stress through implementation of the HSE's management standards. Ensure that workers will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload, tasks or performance management targets. Ensure that managers understand the menopause and are prepared to discuss any concerns that staff may have in a supportive manner. Ensure managers have a positive attitude and understand that they should offer adjustments to workload and tasks if needed. Allow flexible/home working. Make allowance for potential additional need for sickness absence. Ensure that staff are trained in mental health awareness. Raise general awareness of issues around the menopause so colleagues are more likely to be supportive. Provide opportunities to network with colleagues experiencing similar issues (menopause action and support group). Ensure a quiet area/room is available. Provide access to Counselling services.
Psychological symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Difficulty concentrating</li> </ul>	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily; for example, learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue), performance may be	Carry out a stress risk assessment and address work-related stress through implementation of the HSE's management standards. Reassure workers that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets.

Symptom	Examples of workplace factors which could worsen or interact with symptoms	Suggested adjustments
	<p>affected and work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.</p> <p>Loss of confidence may result.</p>	<p>Ensure that managers understand the menopause and are prepared to discuss any concerns that staff may have in a supportive manner.</p> <p>Ensure managers have a positive attitude and understand that they should offer adjustments to workload and tasks if needed.</p> <p>Reduce demands if workload identified as an issue.</p> <p>Provide additional time to complete tasks if needed, or consider substituting with alternative tasks.</p> <p>Allow flexible/home working.</p> <p>Offer and facilitate alternative methods of communicating tasks and planning of work to assist memory.</p> <p>Ensure a quiet area/room is available.</p> <p>Provide access to counselling services.</p>



## Appendix 4: Risk Assessment form – Menopause support

**Risk Assessment form – Menopause support**

*To be completed by the head of school /line manager with the employee to support colleagues who are experiencing menopausal symptoms.  
Please note that this is a template of a person-centred risk assessment.*

Employee Name: Job role: Head of School	Date assessed:	Review date: Termly or as needed, +++++ to keep line manager informed of any changes as needed.
School:	Assessed by and any additional comments:	

1 What are the potential issues within the workplace that need to be considered in order to minimise the impact of menopausal symptoms?  Carry over from related conditions in the Menopause policy	2. What measures can be put in place to assist in dealing with this?	3. Does an action need to be implemented in accordance with the following measure (box 2)? (RAG rate H,M,L)	4. Action taken in relation to the measure in box 3 By whom/ by date, and revised RAG rating
Information on menopause	Does <b>FORENAME</b> have access to information such as a Menopause Policy, Sickness and Absence Policy, Occupational Health (OH), Review of this risk assessment, open conversations and if a OH referral is needed as a supportive measure, this can be applied for.		
Sickness reporting	If <b>FORENAME</b> is unable to attend work due to menopausal symptoms to report these to a line manager. Is this a female?		

<p><b>General Well-being/Stress</b></p>	<p>Are there appropriate mechanisms in place to deal with other related issues such as stress management (e.g. counselling services?).</p> <p><b>FORENAME</b> has access to the trust senior mental health lead, Kerry Westbrook, this is not restricted to a day per week, if support is needed, Kerry will do her utmost to support as where her diary allows. k.westbrook@heartsacademy.uk</p>		
<p><b>Facilities</b></p>	<p>Are there well-maintained toilet facilities?</p> <p>Is there a hygiene disposal bin?</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet.</p> <p>Ensure cover is available when needed.</p>		
<p><b>Temperature</b></p> <p>Regulation of body temperature</p>	<p>Is ventilation available?</p> <p>Has additional ventilation (e.g., desk fan, <b>FORENAME</b> to open / sit by a window) been discussed/provided if necessary?</p> <p>Is there access to facilities to store and chill water?</p>		
<p><b>Environment/ Duties</b></p>	<p>Has a DSE (Display Screen Equipment) assessment been completed recently? This should be undertaken via Smartlog.</p> <p>Is the workstation area considered for someone going through the menopause? (Colour of fabric on chairs is not pale in colour)</p> <p>Is there access to natural light? <b>FORENAME</b>'s office has a large external facing window</p> <p>Is the environment too noisy?</p> <p>Do you have sufficient workspace?</p>		

**What other support can be provided to support the employee and help them to continue to do their job effectively whilst experiencing menopausal symptoms?**


**Are there any other issues that need to be addressed following discussion?**

Line manager signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Line Managers full name \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of review	Outcome of review and follow-up action

Line manager signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Line Managers full name \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_