



Policy:	TDET Menopause Support Policy
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TDET Menopause Support Policy

Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines guidance for Thomas Deacon Education Trust ("TDET") to help provide staff with the right support to better manage menopausal symptoms at work. TDET wants to enable everyone to understand what the menopause is and to encourage staff to openly talk about it, without embarrassment.
- 1.2 This policy does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not intended to have any contractual effect. TDET reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.
- 1.3 The menopause is a natural stage of life experienced by most women, although it can also affect transmen, transwomen, non-binary and intersex individuals. However, it remains a stigma or a tabooed subject in many workplaces.
- 1.4 Nearly 3 out of 4 women experiencing menopausal symptoms are in work, and previous studies have shown that most individuals are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager and ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.
- 1.5 The menopausal transition need not be an awkward topic and it should not be regarded solely as a female issue. Our aim is to create an inclusive working environment where employees feel confident to discuss the symptoms they are experiencing, how it may be affecting their personal and work life and discuss any practical adjustments that they may benefit from.
- 1.6 Whilst not every woman suffers with their symptoms, supporting those who do may help improve their experience at work.

What is Menopause?

- 2.1 The menopause is defined as the biological stage in a woman's life when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life.

The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen levels decline. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach

the menopause is 51, but around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age, this is known as premature menopause.

2.2 Before and after a woman's body experiences the menopause, she may experience Perimenopause and Post-menopause, these are defined as:

- **Perimenopause** refers to the time leading up the menopause, during which a woman's body makes the natural transition into menopause, marking the end of her reproductive years.
- **Post-menopause** refers to the years after the menopause, during which, menopausal symptoms, such as hot flushes can ease in many women. However, as a result of lower levels of oestrogen, postmenopausal women are at an increased risk for several health conditions, such as osteoporosis and heart disease.

Symptoms of the Menopause

3.1 Women can experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with the menopause transition; it is important to note that these symptoms can fluctuate and can be felt to varying degrees. Not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support whereas others may experience significant symptoms, some of which can be quite severe and have a significant impact on a woman's everyday activities. Common symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- Hot flushes
- Difficulty sleeping and night sweats
- Feeling tired and lacking energy
- Psychological issues such as anxiety and/or depression, panic attacks, etc.
- Mood swings
- Problems with memory and poor concentration
- Headaches including migraines
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Palpitations
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains.

3.2 Menopausal symptoms can last for up to several years after a woman's last period, although some women experience them for much longer.

The Male Menopause

4.1 When men reach their late 40s to early 50s, some may develop certain physical and psychological symptoms that can cause a significant impact on a man's everyday activities.

4.2 The term, 'Male Menopause' suggests that these associated symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to what occurs in the female menopause. However, this is not true.

- 4.3 Although testosterone levels do decline as men age, this is a steady decline from around the age of 30 to 40, at around a deterioration of less than 2% a year; this decline in itself is unlikely to cause any problems. A testosterone deficiency that develops later in life, also known as late-onset hypogonadism (where the testes produce few or no hormones), can sometimes be responsible for the associated symptoms, but in many cases the symptoms are not related to hormones.
- 4.4 A "midlife crisis" can be responsible for these symptoms; this can happen when men think they have reached life's halfway stage. Alternatively, it can be the result of lifestyle factors or psychological issues such as stress, anxiety or depression.
- 4.5 Men are equally encouraged to raise any concerns they have with their line manager or HR and discuss ways in which TDET can provide support.

Symptoms of the Male Menopause

- 5.1 Men can experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with the 'male menopause' transition; it is important to note that these symptoms can fluctuate and can be felt to varying degrees. Common symptoms experienced by men around the stated age include, but are not limited to:
- mood swings and irritability
 - psychological issues such as anxiety and/or depression, panic attacks, etc.
 - loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise
 - a general lack of enthusiasm or energy
 - difficulty sleeping at night or increased tiredness
 - poor concentration and short-term memory
 - lowered self-esteem

Scope and Purpose of this Policy

- 6.1 It is important to note that experiencing any of the above symptoms can pose a challenge for women within the workplace. It can influence the way an employee previously handled their responsibilities and relationships at work; for example, she may find certain responsibilities more stressful than before, her concentration may lapse from time to time, and she may require more support than previously needed. In addition, she can feel physically unwell and require more time off work. Therefore, TDET is committed to providing the appropriate support to employees going through the menopause and will aim to make adjustments where reasonably practicable, on a confidential basis where possible. This includes:
- promoting a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement, allowing employees to engage in discussions about the menopause;

- educating and informing members of Senior Leadership Teams, Line Managers and members of Academy Committees, regarding the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support affected staff at work;
- ensuring staff suffering with menopausal symptoms feel confident to engage in discussions surrounding this and to ask for support and any reasonable adjustments that will help them to enable them to continue to be successful within their roles;
- facilitating requests for flexible working should be considered where reasonably practicable;
- providing support and services, such as occupational health referrals, for staff affected by or absent by reason of the menopause where appropriate;
- ensuring risk assessments include or specifically address menopausal symptoms; and

6.2 Additionally, in recognition of menopausal symptoms, TDET acknowledges that increased levels of stress can be a genuine problem and should be considered when supporting applicable individuals.

6.3 TDET wishes to support employees in their personal circumstances and will make necessary accommodations for those experiencing the menopause. However, it is important that the good operation of TDET is not adversely affected, where this can be avoided.

6.4 Reasonable adjustments will depend on specific circumstances such as symptoms, job role etc. but the types of changes that might help could be:

- access to cold water whilst at work
- easy access to toilet facilities
- making sure the temperature is comfortable, providing a fan or access to fresh air
- adjusting uniform requirements or providing more items of uniform
- providing somewhere to store extra clothes or change clothes during the day
- be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance; if an employee's performance suddenly dips, consideration could be given as to whether the menopause may be a contributory factor.

6.4 Staff are encouraged to talk to their line manager if they are struggling with any of their symptoms. However, if they do not feel comfortable talking to their line manager, then they should raise their concerns with the TDET HR Team.

6.5 Staff can also discuss their concerns in confidence by contacting the Employee Assistance Helpline, where they will be directed to a suitable trained consultant who may offer further advice.

Absence due to Menopausal Symptoms

- 7.1 If a member of staff is absent due to the menopausal symptoms they are experiencing, they are required to follow the sickness absence reporting. Where applicable reasonable adjustments will be considered in line with the TDET Sickness Absence Policy.

Confidentiality

- 8.1 Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. In order to facilitate TDET's aim to promote a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement, to allow employees to engage in discussions about menopause; every member of staff will be responsible for observing a high level of confidentiality where required, whether another member of staff has confided in them, supporting a colleague who is suffering from menopausal symptoms or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a policy or procedure.
- 8.2 A breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action in accordance with the TDET Disciplinary Procedure.
- 8.3 However, there are occasions when matters reported by female staff suffering from certain menopausal symptoms (such as stress) may have to be brought to the attention of a third party. For example, where duties may need to be reallocated within to alleviate stress. If this is the case, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.
- 8.4 TDET will monitor the development and distribution of good practice, the recognition of the symptoms related to the menopause, awareness of and effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

Additional external sources of help and support for employees and managers

[Menopause Matters](#) provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options

[The Daisy Network](#) provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency

[Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk) Provides an overview of menopause

[RCOG](#) The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information

APPENDIX 1 - EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below)
- Agree actions, and how to implement them
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting
- Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in passing.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support should be considered as detailed below:

Hot Flushes

- Consider temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk or moving near a window, or away from a heat source
- Easy access to drinking water
- Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform, such as by removing a jacket
- Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

Heavy/light Periods

- Have permanent access to toilet and wash facilities
- Ensure sanitary disposable products are available in toilet facilities
- Provide storage space for a change of clothing if required

Headaches

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water
- Offer a quiet space to work, where reasonably practicable
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices
- Have time out to take medication if needed

Difficulty Sleeping

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly suffering from a lack of sleep
- Consider homeworking requested through the TDET Flexible Homeworking Policy, if appropriate to the employees' role, if fatigued to reduce travelling etc.
- Agree time out from others, when required
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to clear their head

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Continuous Development discussions
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues
- Consider coaching to the individual which might help with confidence
- Offer reassurance about a person's value and worth in the organisation
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work

Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly where reasonably practicable
- Review task allocation and workload
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment
- Consider quiet space to work
- Consider noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices
- Reduce interruptions
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work

Anxiety

- Promote counselling services provided by the TDET Employee Assistance Programme provider – Health Assured
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of work their area
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk

Medical Advice and Impact of Work upon

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety. If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace. Occupational Health can carry out a holistic assessment of the employee to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be contributing to or exacerbating menopause symptoms