

IMSPo6oBT: MENOPAUSE POLICY

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Document History			
Version number	Edited by	Date reviewed	Summary of changes
1.0		March 2011	Version 1
1.1	HR	March 2019	Updated in line with recently reviewed polices
1.2	HR	Oct 2023	Cyclical review - Minor revisions and corrections
1.3	HR	Feb 2025	Updated contact details and minor amends to content

1. PURPOSE

As a company, Mears Group are committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all employees.

Menopause is a natural part of all women's lives; it is not always an easy transition. But, with the right support, it can be much better. Trans, non-binary and intersex people can also experience the menopause.

By providing clear guidance for employees and managers, this policy is intended to be used in a helpful and supportive manner to ensure that an employee's wellbeing is treated as a matter of importance and that health issues are handled sympathetically.

This policy sets out the guidelines for employees and managers on providing the right support to affected employees, raising awareness of the menopause and to break the stigma and taboo surrounding this issue, thereby creating an environment where employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and to ask for adjustments at work.

2. SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to all Mears Group Plc employees and its subsidiary Companies.

This policy does not form any part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

3. DEFINITIONS

Line Manager - refers to the direct line manager on Workday for the employee, or alternatively in the event that they are not available, then the manager's manager.

HR – primarily refers to the HR Advisory team who will be responsible for providing advice and guidance to managers on policy and process.

Employee – is an individual who is directly employed by Mears Group and or any of its subsidiaries. It does not include self-employed, agency or contractors for the Group.

Perimenopause - is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes such as irregular periods or other symptoms associated with a change in hormone levels. This can be years before the menopause.

Menopause – defined as a biological state in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this.

Post menopause - is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

This policy refers to 'menopause' as a general term, which can also include 'perimenopause' and 'post-menopause'.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the policy, responsibilities are devolved as follows:

Line Manager:

- Read and understand the contents of the policy and procedure.
- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of menopause.

ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversations and treating the discussions sensitively and professionally.

- Put in place appropriate adjustments to support affected employees, keeping records of any adjustments agreed and hold ongoing discussions and reviews to provide any further support, as necessary.

Employees:

- Take responsibility for looking after their own health and wellbeing.
- Be open and honest in conversations with managers.
- Be understanding of colleagues who may be affected and who may have adjustments in place to support them due to menopausal symptoms.
- Recognise the potential sensitivity of the subject and respect others' decisions on privacy and confidentiality.

HR:

- Ensure this policy is understood and implemented consistently by managers, employees and, where applicable, trade union representatives.
- Provide advice and guidance on the application of the policy and related policies to employees and managers.

5. POLICY

This policy sets out to explain how menopause may affect employees and the issues which may arise in the workplace. It is our aim:

- To ensure everyone understands what menopause is and can confidently have good conversations with their line manager and colleagues, if they so choose.
- To educate and inform all employees about the potential symptoms of menopause, the importance of this issue, and how they can support employees experiencing these symptoms at work.
- To ensure that all employees experiencing menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it, ask for support, and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their role.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Ensure managers are aware that increased sickness absence or changes in performance may be related to the menopause.

The Symptoms

Not every employee will experience every symptom or feel the need to ask for help and support. Symptoms could include the following:

Mind fog/memory lapses/poor concentration and short-term memory	Awkward and embarrassing word and name gaps, difficulty concentrating.
Anxiety	A persistent and nagging feeling of tension and nervousness which can manifest as palpitations, dry mouth, chest pain, nausea, headaches or even panic attacks.
Mood Swings	A spectrum of emotions from feeling unexpectedly tearful right through to irrational anger.
Hot Flashes	Unexpected and sudden rushes of heat often in the face, neck and chest, making skin red and sweaty.
Night Sweats	Waking up in the night sweating profusely.
Chills	A surprising onset of chills and not being able to warm up.
Insomnia	A persistent state of wakefulness or regularly waking up in the night which leads to tiredness and exhaustion.
Bladder Issues	Urinary infections, occasional leakage and needing to go to the bathroom more, particularly during the night.
Itchy Skin / Skin Crawling Sensation	Uncomfortable sensations on the skin which causes it to itch.
Numbness or pins and needles	Occasional unpleasant sensations or numbness
Joint or muscle pain	An uncomfortable feeling of soreness, swelling and stiffness around the joints. It can often be worse in the morning.
Breast Tenderness	Dull throbbing, tenderness and soreness, but can also feel like sudden stabbing pains.
Bloating and weight gain	Weight gain and difficulty losing weight. There can also be a general feeling of bloating, tightness and swelling in the abdomen.
Headaches and migraines	Often experienced as throbbing pains on one side of the head, as well as a sensitivity to light and noise.
Burning Tongue	Burning, numb, tender, tingling sensation of the tongue
Changes to taste and smell	Things can taste and smell different, stronger, weaker, less or more pleasant
Hair Loss	Hair can become more brittle, fall out all over and be replaced by finer hair, making it look and feel thinner.
Heart Palpitations	Feels as if your heart is pounding or racing. The feeling can also rise through the neck and throat.

Period Irregularities	Periods may be early or late, heavy or light, short or long without any obvious pattern.
Low confidence / self-esteem	Forgetting words, feeling tired, flushed, distracted, or any of the above symptoms can lead to corrosive concerns about performance and competence.
Lowered Libido	A decline in sex drive, it is perfectly normal but can cause distress and disappointment.
Fat Distribution	Such as developing a large stomach.
Lack of enthusiasm or energy	A general lack of motivation or willingness to carry-out normal day-to-day activities.
Loss of muscle mass	Men can suffer reduced muscle mass and feelings of physical weakness.

Discussions

It is recognised that menopause is a very personal experience and different adjustments, and levels of support may be needed for different employees. Line managers should seek to provide appropriate support and adjustments when needed to help employees deal with issues arising from the menopause. Should an employee request a meeting to discuss concerns of the menopause or wishes to speak about a family member who is going through the menopause, line managers must adhere to the following:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation.
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality.
- Encourage employees to speak openly and honestly.
- Suggest ways the employee can be supported.
- 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.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically. Medical intervention from a GP or trained professional may ultimately be the support required, but there are other adjustments that should be considered in the workplace, detailed below:

Hot Flashes	Providing a fan for the desk, a desk near a window or away from a heat source. Easy access to drinking water, access to washrooms if work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area.
Heavy/Light Periods	Ease of access to washroom facilities.
Headaches	Ease of access to fresh drinking water, a quiet space to work, noise reducing headphones for open offices, time out to take medication if needed.

Difficulty sleeping	Consider flexible working arrangements, particularly if experiencing lack of sleep.
Loss of Confidence	Regular Personal Development Discussions, regular protected time with line manager to discuss any issues, protected time to catch up with work.
Poor Concentration	Understand whether there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse and adjust working pattern accordingly, review task allocation and workload, provide books for lists, action boards or other memory- assisting equipment, offer quiet space to work, offer noise reducing headphones, protected time to avoid disruptions and time to catch up with work.
Anxiety / Panic Attacks / Low Mood	Time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission, identify a buddy to talk to outside of work, time away from work to undertake relaxation techniques and/or mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

6. SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Mental Health First Aiders have received specific training on menopause and are there to provide support and guidance but also to identify expert sources of support, whether that is recommending a visit to a GP or signposting employees to external sources. The list of Mental Health First Aiders can be located on Connect.

Confidential support is available through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP service is a confidential 24/7, 365 days a year service. Accredited counsellors and experienced information specialists offer support and signposting across a range of personal legal, medical, health and wellbeing issues, as well as a telephone counselling service.

Employees can contact the EAP helpline by calling 0800 756 0834 for help with issues including health and relationships, financial or legal queries.

Side effects from Medication

Employees should seek advice about the possible side effects of taking prescribed medication and make their GP or Pharmacist aware of their roles and responsibilities. If there are side effects that may prevent the employee carrying out their day-to-day duties, their line manager must be made aware to discuss alternatives. For example, if medication causes drowsiness, care should be taken when driving, operating vehicles or machinery etc, or carrying out tasks that are complex, require sustained concentration or potentially involve dealing with customers or service-users.

Menopause Forum

The Menopause Forum is one of our Employee Networks and Forums and hosts bimonthly meetings on Teams for employees who have lived experience of perimenopause or menopause or have an interest in health and wellbeing factors relating to menopause. Information on the Menopause Forum and the dates of future meetings can be found via the Mears Employee Networks and Forums tile on Connect.

7. FAIRNESS AND INCLUSION

Mears Group PLC is committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that the way the Group treat our employees does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the grounds of any protected characteristics.

Mears Group PLC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that its staff comply with the Equality Act 2010 so that no individual is subjected to unlawful discrimination because of a protected characteristic.

8. OTHER RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Fairness and Inclusion Policy
- Improving Work Performance Policy
- Management of Attendance Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Driving at Work Policy

9. APPENDICES

There are no appendices referred to in this policy.