
Menopause Policy

1. Introduction

GRAHAM is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its employees and recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause (post menopause).

Whilst the menopause is a natural part of life it isn't always an easy transition and so it is imperative that workers who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect.

The policy acknowledges that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the menopause and so it sets out guidelines for employees and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

GRAHAM agree to work proactively to make reasonable adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not negatively impact their symptoms.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees in the company. It includes all employees transferring into the business through TUPE terms and conditions, unless expressly stated otherwise in their contract with GRAHAM.

While this Policy uses the term 'women' to talk about people who may experience perimenopause and menopause transition, we know that it can impact trans or non-binary colleagues who don't identify as women in the same manner. We will support all colleagues experiencing perimenopause and menopause transition, so encourage colleagues to ask for help if they need it.

3. Policy Objectives

- To ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently have good conversations, and are clear on the organisation's policy and practices, supported by the Human Resources and Wellbeing Teams.
- To educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support employees at work.
- To support employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms, making reasonable adjustments where needed
- To ensure that staff suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it, and can ask for this support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- To reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- To ensure information about an employee's health is kept confidential
- To always treat affected employees with respect, not making judgements or assumptions about employees based on their age or because they have told us that they are in menopause transition
- Treat any issues of bullying and harassment in relation to health issues associated with the menopause seriously - exclusionary or discriminatory practices will not be tolerated.
- To assure staff that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

4. Symptoms

Most people might know about the symptom of hot flushes during menopause transition, but there are a number of physical and mental health symptoms we know could affect employees at work, that we might need to put adjustments in place for:

- psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- hot flushes
- sleep disturbances (including night sweats) that can make someone feel tired and irritable
- extreme PMS or heavy bleeding that might cause pain or embarrassment at work
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- bladder problems including recurrent urinary tract infections and cystitis
- headaches
- skin changes – dryness, itchiness

We know that impacted employees might experience some, none, or all of one of these symptoms. If an employee experiences symptoms to the extent that they are affecting them at work, they should talk to the Menopause Support Staff, their Line Manager or HR about any changes we can make to help them.

5. Menopause Support Staff

We recognise that employees impacted by the menopause may not want to discuss the issues with their Line Manager or HR in the first instance, due to the need for confidentiality and sensitivity.

We have therefore designated and trained specific, appropriate female HR staff to act as a first line of support for employees.

Menopause Support Staff will be responsible for:

- Being the first point of contact for staff wanting to discuss the menopause
- Signposting employees to appropriate sources of help and advice
- Providing support and advice to HR and Line Managers in determining and agreeing any reasonable adjustments (if required)
- Supporting employees at meetings with their manager to discuss menopausal symptoms and adjustments

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health
- Being open and honest in conversations with Menopause Support Staff, Managers and HR (as appropriate)
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues experiencing the impact of the menopause
- When an individual wishes to share this information with their colleague/s, respecting confidentiality and being supportive of any adjustments their colleague is receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Line Managers are responsible for

- Familiarising themselves with this Menopause Policy and understanding the support that they can provide to their staff

- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
- Work with the Menopause Support Staff to provide support to impacted employees
- Agree with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required
- Carry out appropriate risk assessments and record any adjustments agreed, ensuring all actions are implemented
- Ensure ongoing dialogue through agreed review dates
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may discuss the matter with the Menopause Support Staff.

Human Resources

Human Resources will:

- Ensure that Menopause Support staff are trained to deliver an effective service for impacted employees
- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy
- Offer support to employees affected by menopause symptoms.

7. Reasonable Adjustments

There might be reasonable adjustments we can make at work to help employees manage their menopausal symptoms. These are likely to be temporary changes while an employee goes through menopause transition.

Where an employee is experiencing symptoms of the menopause they should speak to either their Line Manager or the Menopause Support Staff in the first instance.

The Menopause Support Workers can liaise with the Line Manager and accompany the employee to any agreed meeting.

The Manager may do a risk assessment to understand more about how an employee's menopausal symptoms might affect them at work and any adjustment they may need.

Appendix 1 outlines a number of symptoms of the menopause and potential adjustments. Please note that this list is neither exhaustive or a guarantee that suggested adjustments will suit every role or circumstance.

8. Appeal process

If an employee considers that they have been unfairly treated with regard to the Menopause policy, they should raise this informally with their manager in the first instance.

If the employee's complaint relates to their manager, they should raise it with a more senior manager. If an employee is not satisfied following this route, they have the right to raise a grievance in accordance with the organisational Grievance policy.

9. Appendix 1 – Workplace issues/suggested adjustments

Menopause Symptom	Potential reasonable adjustment
<p style="text-align: center;">Hot flushes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure it is environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source • Provide easy access to drinking water • Ability to adapt clothing if required, such as by removing a jacket • Be flexible about additional breaks. • If available, provide 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
<p style="text-align: center;">Headaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide easy access to drinking water • Offer a quiet space to work • Where appropriate, offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices • Have time out to take medication if needed
<p style="text-align: center;">Difficulty sleeping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider option of flexible working or to come in late and make time up later, particularly if suffering from a lack of sleep
<p style="text-align: center;">Low mood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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'
<p style="text-align: center;">Loss of confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there are regular catch up meetings • Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues • Have agreed protected time to catch up with work

<p style="text-align: center;">Poor concentration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly • Review task allocation and workload • Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment • Offer quiet space to work • Where appropriate, offer 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
<p style="text-align: center;">Anxiety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of work 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
<p style="text-align: center;">Muscular aches bone and joint pains</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make any necessary adjustments through review of risk assessments • Review work schedules/tasks and keep under review. • Consider providing alternative lower-risk tasks. • Follow Health Service Executive (HSE) guidance and advice on manual handling and preventing MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders).

In accordance with medical guidance, women should be advised to seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance where symptoms are prolonged, severe or causing particular distress.