

Menopause and Perimenopause Policy

The majority of the dental workforce will be directly affected by menopause. The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and honest workplace where the Practice and all employees can discuss any issues associated with the perimenopause and menopause, and to ensure the necessary support is offered to employees when needed.

Our aim is to be able to talk openly and honestly about the impact of the perimenopause and menopause on affected employees, and act in a positive and respectful manner towards our staff.

What is menopause?

The menopause is when the ovaries stop producing eggs and the production of the hormones oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone fluctuates and then falls. This usually happens as a natural process, but it can also be caused by removal of the ovaries, or due to certain treatments for cancer.

When hormone levels drop, it can cause a wide range of unpleasant symptoms.

Medically, the menopause is defined as the point in time when there has not been a period for more than 12 consecutive months; on average this is at age 51. This is often the last symptom of the menopause, with many others preceding it for years.

Some individuals enter an early menopause (under 45 years) or have Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) if their periods stop under 40 years. The menopause is not a condition that just affects older staff.

The menopause and perimenopause can affect women in their 20s, 30s, 40s, as well as trans and non-binary people who don't identify as women and require the same support, flexibility and dignity in the Practice as others with similar symptoms.

What is perimenopause?

The perimenopause is the time leading up to this when hormones fluctuate and start falling, symptoms start to creep in and periods are still occurring even if irregularly. The perimenopause can last for years and most commonly affects you during your 40s.

The drop in hormones affects all systems in the body so symptoms vary greatly. However, symptoms commonly include:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats and difficulty sleeping
- Dry skin, mouth and eyes
- Hair loss
- Fatigue
- Memory lapses
- Anxiety
- Brain fog
- Palpitations
- Headaches
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced concentration
- Heavy and unexpected periods (perimenopause)

Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work. The most common symptoms that impact individuals at work are anxiety, brain fog and fatigue, and these often lead to lack of confidence and self-esteem in their personal and professional lives.

Tasks and responsibilities that would never have phased someone before can suddenly seem overwhelming and intimidating. Organisational skills can be impaired by brain fog and memory lapses, fatigue and sleeping problems can have a huge impact on punctuality, performance and stamina at work.

Physical symptoms such as hot flushes, heavy and unexpected periods, and the need to urinate frequently and urgently can be embarrassing and inconvenient.

What we will do

The Practice recognises that the perimenopause and menopause can be a significant issue in the workplace for those affected, and therefore commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing perimenopause and menopausal symptoms.

To ensure we can provide our employees with the best support possible the Practice encourages staff to be open and honest in these conversations. The Practice welcomes any suggestions employees may have to improve the workplace.

When responding to an employee experiencing difficulties caused by the perimenopause and menopause, the Practice Owner or Practice Manager will consider an individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Discussions will be addressed sensitively, and confidentiality will be maintained.

Examples of adjustments may include:

- Conducting a risk assessment to identify any particular areas that are a detriment to employees going through the perimenopause and menopause
- Allowing the employee to move so they are closer to toilet facilities or away from hot and cold spots around the practice
- Implementing further temperature control, such as access to a fan [or air conditioning] and access to cold water
- Assessing how work is allocated and whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day
- Allowing additional breaks
- Considering flexible working hours in accordance with the practice policy
- Making allowances for additional needs for sickness absence triggers

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

The Practice is an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to creating a practice culture of respect and understanding and recognise the value of diversity within the team. We will not treat someone less favourably because of their disability or gender and aware of its duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Other policies of relevance

[Equal opportunities policy for staff](#)

[Sickness and injury absence policy](#)

[Flexible working policy](#)

External resources

The following external resources may also be helpful:

- Menopause matters (<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk>), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options
- The Daisy Network charity (<https://www.daisynetwork.org>), which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency
- Balance (<https://www.balance-menopause.com>), which is an online menopause library and free educational resource site
- The Menopause Café (<https://www.menopausecafe.net>), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause
- BDJ Team also have a collection of articles on [menopause in the dental practice](#) which you may find interesting.