

Menopause Policy

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1. Objective

This policy outlines Mewburn Ellis LLP's (The Firm) policy for supporting people who are experiencing the menopause.

The policy is primarily intended for people who are themselves going through the menopause, but also aims to provide support to people indirectly affected by the menopause, such as those whose partner is going through the menopause.

Predominantly, it is women who go through the menopause. However, we recognise that not all people who go through the menopause identify as women¹. Accordingly, this policy has been written using inclusive language wherever possible without losing clarity. This policy is intended both for women, non-binary people, trans people, and all the other groups that do not identify as "women" but who may be affected by the menopause. An example of such a group is transmasculine people who retain their internal reproductive organs and internal gonads.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or more frequently if substantial changes to its effective operation are necessary, and/or when there are significant changes to employment legislation and best practice.

2. Purpose and Scope

Menopause is a natural process and for many people can be positively managed through lifestyle adjustments. However, the Firm recognises that for some, the menopause, or its symptoms, are not always an easy transition and there may be symptoms that impact their working lives.

It is estimated that 80% of menopausal people experience some symptoms. Of those, one in four experience severe symptoms and consider leaving their jobs as a result. 10% of menopausal people actually stop working because of their symptoms.

The Firm are committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here, and our Menopause Policy forms part of this commitment.

This policy applies to everyone in the Firm (employees and Partners) both within the UK and DE, including those who may be on a fixed term contract.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Human Resources

- Offering guidance to line managers on the interpretation of this policy and guidance
- Supporting those who confide in them about menopausal symptoms including supporting and encouraging them to share this information with their line manager
- Signposting those affected to resources available to them as a member of the Firm and those available more widely to anyone
- Ensuring this policy is reviewed regularly and remains compliant with relevant employment legislation
- Ensuring that the policy is accessible and available to all our people

¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 6 January 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Gender identity, England and Wales: Census 2021](#) // 0.5% of respondents answered "No" to the question "Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?"

3.2 Line Manager

- Familiarising themselves with this policy and its guidance
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, being aware of boundaries and that you are not there to diagnose menopause but can lend a listening ear, offer support and signpost to resources the individual may find helpful
- Treating all discussions sensitively and privately, noting that not everyone knows they are in perimenopause and others may notice changes before the individual does
- Using guidance in this policy to identify with an employee someone what support and adjustments can be offered to help someone experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause

3.3 Employee/Partner

- Taking reasonable responsibility and care for their own health and well-being (see appendix 1 for information on resources and support available)
- Being open to having conversations with their line manager, or a member of the HR Team if they feel more comfortable
- Upholding a positive working environment treating everyone with dignity and respect including being understanding about any necessary support or adjustments their colleagues may be receiving to support them with menopausal symptoms

4. Related Documents

- [Aviva DigiCare+ Workplace App](#)
- [Aviva DigiCare+ Employee FAQs](#)
- [Employee Assistance Programme Overview](#)
- [Thrive App Overview](#)

5. Related Policies

- Blended Working Guidance and FAQs
- Flexible Working Policy
- Respect at Work Policy

6. Policy and Procedure

6.1 Definitions

“Premature menopause”

Early menopause is defined as a person going through the menopause before the age of 40. It can happen naturally, or as a side effect of some treatments such as for cancer or IVF.

“Ovarian insufficiency”
(also known as *early menopause*)

Also known as premature ovarian failure, this is when someone’s ovaries stop working normally before they are 40 and stop making normal levels of certain hormones, particularly oestrogen. This can sometimes run in families but can also be caused by certain infections or autoimmune diseases.

“Perimenopause”

The time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

“Menopause”	Defined as a biological stage in a person’s life that occurs when they stop menstruating, usually when someone has not had a period for twelve consecutive months and reach the end of their natural reproductive life. The average age in the UK for someone to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.
“Post menopause”	The time after menopause has occurred.

6.2 Aims of this Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Encourage and promote an environment where colleagues feel confident in discussing menopausal issues openly and asking for support where required
- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is and how it may affect them or their colleagues in both their lives and the workplace
- Educate and inform all everyone about the potential symptoms of menopause and how people going through this may be supported at work
- Support everyone experiencing menopausal symptoms to leading a normal working life
- Assure everyone that we are committed to supporting their needs during menopause

6.3 Symptoms

According to the NHS, most menopausal people will experience some symptoms around the menopause, the duration and severity of these symptoms varies from person to person. Symptoms typically start a few months or years before periods stop (known as perimenopause) and can persist afterwards.

Whilst for most people the menopause occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, it can for some people start a lot earlier, with 1% of those going through the menopause experiencing their first symptoms before they are 40 (premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency). For some, it can start many years before their periods stop.

Most symptoms last around 4 years from the last period. However, for some people this can be up to 12 years.

6.3.1 Common Menopausal Symptoms

Usually, the first sign of menopause is a change in the normal pattern of periods, such as a change in period volume or the frequency.

In addition to a change in the pattern of their periods, about 8 in 10 menopausal people will have additional symptoms for some time both before and after their periods stop, including;

- Hot flushes – short, sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck and chest, which can make your skin red and sweaty
- Night sweats – hot flushes that occur at night
- Difficulty sleeping – this may make them feel tired and irritable during the day or affect their concentration
- Problems with memory and concentration, sometimes referred to as “brain fog”
- Headaches
- Mood changes
- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Palpitations – heartbeats that suddenly become more noticeable
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains

- Reduced muscle mass
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Heavy periods/bleeds

6.4 Support

6.4.1 Internal Menopause Group

We have created a private Menopause Group on The Hive to support those experiencing symptoms of the menopause. This is a private group but is open to anyone that would like to join, wants more information or to connect with others in the firm that are experiencing menopause symptoms.

The firm and other members of the space can share useful content and information relating to the menopause, it also provides a space for discussion about Perimenopause, Menopause and Post Menopause.

6.4.2 Menopause Champions

The firm has a number of Menopause Champions who have volunteered to provide a listening ear and provide support to those going through menopause, approaching menopause, or for those worried or concerned about people they know going through it. They can also help signpost to useful resources that may be able to help.

All of our champions have been on official champion training to support them in their roles and understanding of how they can best support others on the subject of menopause.

Details of who our current champions are can be found [here](#).

6.4.3 External Resources

There are a number of menopause resources available externally providing advice and information from charities, medical professionals and others who have experienced symptoms. Several which you may find useful can be found in appendix 1 some of whom provide free online lessons/webinars to support people with menopause.

In addition, as a member of the firm you have access to the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) and the [Thrive Mental Wellbeing App](#). Whilst not specifically for the menopause, both can be useful resources in supporting with mental health and wellbeing.

6.4.4 Seeking Medical Support

It is believed 4 in 10 menopausal people accept symptoms of the menopause as part of the aging process without seeking any medical support, even though their symptoms are worse than they expected.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in the UK say that people whose lives are affected by menopause should not feel they have to suffer in silence, and, believes all people have the right to be involved in discussions and make informed decisions about their care.

We encourage anyone suffering from symptoms they are concerned about, or to the point they are getting in the way of them going about their normal lives or enjoying life, to talk to their doctor. A doctor or specialist may be able to give advice or treatment to help alleviate the severity of the symptoms.

Remember, it is you experiencing the symptoms, not your doctor, and only you know and understand how these are affecting you. Keeping a list of your symptoms and how they affect you is useful to ensure you cover everything at your appointment.

There are menopause clinics and specialists, you can ask to be referred to one if you don't think your doctor is doing enough or is able to support you. Staff in the UK may also be able to seek an appointment with a specialist for a second opinion via the Firm's Group Income Protection scheme which gives you access to Aviva's DigiCare+ Workplace App. More details on this can be found [here](#).

6.4.5 Discussion with Line Manager/HR

Those suffering with symptoms related to the menopause are encouraged to discuss this openly with their Line Manager.

Where they feel more comfortable, they can discuss with the HR Team in the first instance who will offer support and guidance. It is difficult for some support and adjustments to be considered or put in place without the involvement of the line manager, therefore, HR will encourage a discussion with their line manager but can have the discussion on their behalf if they prefer.

During these discussions they will be encouraged to discuss their symptoms and how they feel these may be impacting them. Consideration of any adjustments (see 6.4.3) that might be suitable will be discussed and agreed, a timeframe should be agreed to meet again to further review how they are feeling and how any adjustments may be helping.

A copy of this policy and its appendices should also be provided to them.

6.4.6 Potential Adjustments to Consider

Some recommendations on adjustments for those experiencing different menopause symptoms are below, the Firm encourages line managers to consider these with those who are affected.

Unfortunately, some facilities such as windows that open, shower facilities or quiet spaces may not be available in some office locations, but the Firm will make these available wherever possible.

Bone and Joint Problems:

- Local risk assessment and moving and handling assessments if their role involved these activities
- Consider temporary adjustments or modifications to work tasks

Difficulty Concentrating/Memory Problems:

- Consider memory assisting equipment which may be as simple as to-do lists, books for lists and actions or diary reminders
- Regular supervision with line manager for additional support if required
- Review task allocation and workload
- Consider flexibility in working pattern, for example if concentration is better or worse at certain times of the day, the Firm's core working hours policy already in place is supportive for this in most roles
- Consider quieter places to work in the office if feasible
- Consider noise reducing headphones to wear in open offices
- Review how interruptions may be reduced
- Consider 'protected time' in diary to do work so that they are not disturbed

Where someone feels they are experiencing 'brain fog', they are encouraged to consider what may be attributing to it including lack of sleep, blood sugar levels, hormone levels, diet or stress. Understanding what may be the cause can help identify some things that may help alleviate the symptoms; the website 'Henpicked' (see Resources Available in appendix 1) has an article relating to this topic that can be found [here](#) that may be useful. Additionally, [The Menopause Plan](#) has processes that can help identify what the cause may be.

Headaches:

- Access to drinking water
- Access to a quiet space or area for a short break and to take medication if required
- Consider noise reducing headphones to wear in open offices

Hot Flushes:

- Review control of workplace temperature and ventilation – consider a desktop fan (where possible a USB connected desk fan to help ensure environmentally friendly and reduce any difficulties with nearby power source availability) in an office or locate a desk closer to an opening window or away from a heat source if possible
- Easy access to drinking water
- Access to washroom facilities
- Recommend loose fitting layers and breathable fabrics such as cotton rather than manmade fibres
- Access to a rest area/room for breaks
- Access to a quiet room/area for a short break to manage a severe hot flush

Irregular/Heavy Bleeding:

- Access to toilet and washroom facilities
- Access to storage for a change of clothing
- May require more frequent short breaks

Low Mood/ Depression/Anxiety/Panic Attacks/Loss of Confidence:

- Regular supervision with manager for additional support if required with regular protected time arranged to meet/have a call
- Provide opportunity to openly discuss concerns/difficulties
- Access to a quiet area for a short break if required
- Encouragement to discuss symptoms with their GP (Alva is an organisation whose aim is to transform menopause care and provide some advice on how to talk to your GP about menopause [here](#))
- Signpost and promote to resources (appendix 1) available for support including counselling

Night Sweats:

- Consider start and finish times to accommodate difficulties with any tiredness experienced as a result of night sweats, the Firm's core working hours policy already in place is supportive for this in most roles

Personal/Intimate Issues

- Advise to attend GP practice for advice
- Signpost to Menopause information sources (see appendix 1)

6.4.7 Exercise

Regular exercise is recommended for everyone and brings a variety of benefits to both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Being more physically active can also help with symptoms of the menopause and may help people affected:

- reduce hot flushes;
- manage their weight;
- lift their mood;
- improve self-esteem;
- improve their sleep;
- reduce anxiety; and,
- strengthen pelvic floor muscles.

Because of a reduction in the oestrogen hormone, after menopause people are more likely to be affected by osteopenia and osteoporosis which is a condition that causes bones to become weaker. Keeping active can help bones be stronger and reduce the chances of them breaking or fracturing. Muscle-strengthening and weight-bearing exercises are recommended to support this.

There are many websites offering support and advice on exercise, BUPA provides some advice specifically on exercise and the menopause [here](#).

The NHS has online exercise videos in their Fitness Studio [here](#), whilst not specifically aimed at exercise during the menopause it includes some strength and resistance exercises as well as Pilates and yoga which may be useful.

Appendix 1 – Menopause Support Resources

NHS England

Provides information on the menopause, early menopause, their symptoms and treatments.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

Explains how GPs will determine suitable treatments and interventions they can offer you.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>

The Menopause Charity

Aims to bust myths and support people with fact-based menopause research and ensure access to the safest hormone replacement therapy where it is needed.

<https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

Provides information and advice on the effects of the menopause and your conversations with healthcare professionals.

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>

Newson Health Menopause & Wellbeing Centre

Provides advice from Dr Louise Newton who is passionate about providing clear and factual information about the perimenopause and menopause to as many people as possible

<https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk/resources/>

Women's Health Concern

The patient arm of the British Menopause Society (BMS), a confidential, independent service to advise, reassure and educate people of all ages about their gynaecological, wellbeing and lifestyle concerns.

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>

alva

An organisation who aims to support people with the menopause, they have a host of articles and resources aimed at giving more information and providing advice and support.

<https://withalva.com/menopause>

Women of a Certain Age

Provides information and further support on the menopause, including free menopause courses and has an online community of other people who have been through or going through menopause.

<https://www.womenofacertainstage.com/>

The Daisy Network

A charity dedicated to providing information and support for people who experience early menopause, premature menopause and/or premature ovarian insufficiency.

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Menopause Care Ltd

Offer specialist menopause consultations, it is a private fee-based service, but their website also hosts a number of *Menopause Care Videos* that include interviews, products and tips to help with menopause care.

<https://menopausecare.co.uk/videos>

Hempicked

A website that provides information on managing menopause and an insight into stories of others who are going through/have gone through it and its associated symptoms. They also signpost and provide access to free webinars with discussion from medical experts on the menopause.

<https://hempicked.net/menopause-hub/>

The International Menopause Society

Organisation that works globally to promote and support access to best practice health care for people through their menopause transition and post-reproductive years.

Their website is available in multiple languages.

<https://www.imsociety.org/education/links/>