



ASLEF WORKPLACE MENOPAUSE POLICY – FEBRUARY 2020

1. Policy Statement

The menopause is a normal part of every woman's life; this policy recognises that it is an occupational health issue that is growing in importance.

This policy acknowledges that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause. We are committed to ensuring there is a positive attitude towards the menopause and that all individuals are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, in safe working environments that do not negatively impact on their symptoms.

We want to ensure that women feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue working safely. For this reason, the menopause at work is an issue for both men and women.

This policy will be fully consulted on and regularly reviewed with staff and their trade union representatives and considered at all appropriate health and safety forums/committees.

2. Aims

The aim of this policy to make managers aware of their responsibilities to understand the menopause and related issues and how they can affect staff. It also aims to raise wider awareness and understanding among employees, to outline the support and reasonable adjustments that are available.

3. Legislative Compliance

We undertake to comply with our legal obligations as set out below:

- 3.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Act employers are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risks to all employed menopausal women.
- 3.2 The Equality Act (2010) prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

4. Key principles

It will be recognised that the menopause is a very individual experience and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

We will ensure that all line managers have received menopause awareness training, appropriate information and support will be provided to all workers in relation to the menopause.

Where women feel uncomfortable going to a line manager because they are male, someone much younger or both we will provide an alternative named contact who will be fully trained on menopause and understands the need to deal with issues sensitively and confidentially.

Risk assessments including Stress Risk Assessments will be carried out in consultation with the recognised trade unions which take the specific needs of menopausal women into consideration.

As part of wider occupational health awareness campaigns we will highlight the menopause to foster a positive, open attitude in the workplace and to seek to eradicate any discrimination. Further to this we will also have information on the menopause accessible to staff on noticeboards and the company intranet.

5. Definition

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for women. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months and a woman has reached the end of her reproductive life. After a woman has not had a period for a year she can be described as 'post-menopausal'.

The 'peri-menopause' is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause and can last for four to five years although the duration of the peri-menopause varies greatly from woman to woman.

6. Symptoms

Below are some of the symptoms that women can experience with the onset of the peri-menopause, it can be some or all of these.

Physical symptoms associated with the onset of the peri-menopause can include:

- hot flushes
- palpitations
- night sweats
- insomnia and sleep disturbances
- fatigue
- weight gain
- irritability
- headaches
- joint aches
- dry skin and skin irritation
- dry eyes
- hair loss
- Urinary problems
- Irregular and/or heavy, painful periods, clots and flooding

There may also be psychological symptoms including:

- depression
- anxiety
- panic attacks
- poor concentration
- changes to mood
- poor concentration and memory
- loss of confidence

7. Who is affected

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, in the UK the average age is 51 but it can also happen much earlier. Some women may also experience a medical menopause which occurs suddenly when ovaries are damaged or removed by specific treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery.

We note that intersex and people from non-binary and transgender communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors their experience of the menopause may be different and this should be taken into consideration when determining the required support or adjustments.

8. Workplace factors

This policy recognises that there are many workplace factors which can make working life more difficult for women experiencing the menopause and which may make symptoms worse. These include:

- lack of gender sensitive risk assessments
- lack of awareness of the menopause
- lack of management training on women's health issues
- poor ventilation and air quality
- inadequate access to drinking water
- inadequate or non-existent toilet/washing facilities
- lack of control of temperature/light
- lack of appropriate uniforms or PPE
- inflexible working time rules/break times
- inflexible policies which penalise women because of their symptoms
- unsympathetic line management/colleagues

We are committed to taking proactive steps to eliminate the factors above.

9. Access to support

All managers are expected to take a positive and supportive approach towards discussions about the menopause, however we understand that some employees may feel uncomfortable discussing their menopause status particularly if the line manager is male or much younger.

A designated 'women's manager' will be identified, women will be able to report to this manager, any issues that they feel uncomfortable discussing with a male or young manager. Occasionally, other managers will need to be aware of any medical issues where the woman may need to be

accommodated, for example, extra breaks, shorter working hours etc. This would be on a 'need to know' basis only.

When calling in sick, some detail of the root cause will be recorded, but, where possible, a female manager would be requested to do the Return to Work Interview. Any fitness reviews would continue to be carried out by any manager available.

Any other problems would be discussed with the 'women's manager' informally and in confidence. However, if they affect safety or breach the Code of Conduct, they will need to be formally recorded for future action.

You may also wish to approach your trade union for support.

10. Key actions

10.1 Risk assessments

Managers should ensure risk assessments and stress risk assessments consider the specific requirements of menopausal women and that the working environment is suitable and will not make symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments which may be required.

Common issues that need consideration are workplace temperature and ventilation, access to adequate toilet and washing facilities, access to cold water and sources of workplace stress. Measures to effectively remove or control risks, including the risk of stress will be implemented and adjustments to working conditions will be proactively put in place. All risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.

10.2 Reporting of medication

Hormone Replacement Treatment (HRT) is often prescribed to alleviate the symptoms of the menopause. Side effects may be experienced so medical advice and supervision and is required.

In line with your Drugs and Alcohol Policy, a woman who is given medication to address Menopausal symptoms will need to report it to the relevant parties. However, a designated women's manager, as outlined in Point 9 may be helpful when reporting this medication.

10.3 Flexible working

Changes to working time arrangements should be made available where needed including adjustments to start/finish times, reduced hours, home working, alternative duties, additional breaks and leave should be granted at short notice where necessary.

11. Self-help measures

There are steps that women can take to help themselves, they include:

- healthy eating – a balanced diet can help alleviate some symptoms and keep bones healthy.
- eating regularly
- drinking plenty of water – always make sure to carry a bottle
- wearing natural fibres
- exercising regularly
- consulting a GP on the management of the menopause
- carry a minifan or 'Magicool' to help reduce hot flushes

- ensuring adequate rest and relaxation

12. Signposting and support

- XXXXX employee assistance programme details
- NHS information pages – www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/introduction.aspx
- British Menopause Society – www.thebms.org.uk
- Menopause Matters – www.menopausematters.co.uk
- The Daisy Network – www.daisynetwork.org.uk