

## RBET Menopause Policy

<b>Responsible for initiating review of policy</b>	<b>Centre Governors and RBET Trustees</b>
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<b>Related Policies</b>	<b>RBET Health and Safety Policy</b>

### Menopause Policy

Although this policy refers to women, please consider that those from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Although the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities all ‘people who menstruate’ require consideration.

#### 1 OVERVIEW

1. The menopause can have significant effects on our personal and working life.
2. We aim to create an environment in which all our employees feel informed about the menopause and are comfortable and confident talking about its impact. If you are going through the menopause, you will have support in coping with its effects so that you can continue to do your job successfully.
3. People to whom you can turn for help are:
  - Your line manager
  - Your Head of Centre
  - The Chair of Governors of your Centre

The Governor of your Centre responsible for staff welfare/wellbeing  
The Chair of RBET Trustees

4. This policy should be read alongside our policies on Wellbeing, Equal Opportunities and Data Protection. Reference to staff absence can also be found in the Staff Handbook.
5. This policy does not form part of your employment contract, and we may update it at any time.

## **2 WHAT IS THE MENOPAUSE?**

1. The menopause is a biological process that signals the end of a woman's ability to conceive a child. Typically, a woman will reach menopause between 45-55, although it can be earlier or later.
2. Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.
3. The menopause produces a range of physical and psychological symptoms that can affect many aspects of life. Every woman is different and not all will be affected in the same way or to the same extent.
4. Common symptoms include:
  - Hot flushes
  - Headaches
  - Poor concentration
  - Dry eyes
  - Anxiety
  - Low mood
  - Lack of confidence
  - Panic attacks
  - Poor sleep
  - Weight gain
  - Fatigue
  - Poor memory
  - Joint and muscle pain
  - Change of menstrual cycle
  - Heavy periods
5. Menopause symptoms tend to last about four years but can last longer.

## **3 UNDERSTANDING THE MENOPAUSE**

1. Despite its potentially serious impact on a woman's everyday life, the menopause is still not spoken about as freely as some other physical or mental health issues. We aim to do things differently so that the menopause becomes a normal part of the health and wellbeing conversation.

2. We need you to be aware that the menopause may affect those you work with and sometimes you will need to make certain things easier for women going through it. That might include simply accepting that some adjustments need to be made to a person's role, their working environment, or their working day.

We may not be able to tell you about any menopause-related issues that a particular colleague is experiencing. We need you to accept that and respect their privacy.

If you treat a colleague badly (including making unwanted comments or jokes) because of their menopause symptoms, you could be disciplined.

3. For managers, recognising the symptoms of the menopause is vital to treating an affected employee fairly. It can explain certain behaviours that you might otherwise put down to a poor attitude or performance.

If you think that someone who reports to you may be going through the menopause and it is affecting their performance, and you are not sure what to do, please contact one of the people listed in 1.3. Women who do not get the right support can lose confidence in their ability to do their job (some even decide to leave) and may find that their mental health suffers.

#### **4 HELPING YOU THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE**

1. If you are going through the menopause and are finding things difficult at work, please do not suffer in silence.
2. We know that the menopause is a very personal matter, so we will not raise it with you even if we think you are displaying symptoms. We might ask how you are, in general terms. You can then decide whether to talk to us about the menopause or not. We would encourage you to do so because we will want to support you.
3. We have a four-step procedure that applies to discussions around the menopause and the action we will take:

##### *Step 1*

4. Speaking with your GP or medical specialist about your menopause-related concerns could be a good place for you to start.
5. You should also talk to one of the people listed in 1.3.

##### *Step 2*

6. Meet with the person you have chosen from the list in 1.3. You should expect to be able to have a private, friendly, honest, and constructive

conversation. It can be helpful for another person to be at the meeting too, but it is not essential.

7. We will discuss with you ideas that could make things easier for you. Adjustments will depend on the symptoms you are experiencing and, if relevant, the budget we have available, but things you could ask us to consider could include:

#### Hot flushes

- controlling the temperature of your work area, such as providing a desktop fan, moving near a window or away from a heat source;
- providing easy access to drinking water;
- having access to a quiet room for breaks if you need to manage a severe hot flush.

#### Heavy periods

- allowing you to work somewhere with easy access to toilets;
- providing access to sanitary products in toilets;
- providing storage space for a change of clothing.

#### Headaches

- providing easy access to drinking water;
- providing a quiet space to work;
- providing noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices.

#### Low mood

- agreeing time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- having access to a quiet area.

#### Loss of confidence

- having regular protected time with your manager to discuss any issues.

#### Poor concentration

- adjusting work patterns;
- reviewing task allocation and workload;
- providing quiet spaces to work;
- offering noise reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- reducing interruptions;
- agreeing protected time when you will not be disturbed.

#### Panic attacks and anxiety

- agreeing to have time away from work to undertake relaxation techniques or going for a walk.

Please note: we have included these potential adjustments to help you and your manager consider how best to support you. If there are other things you would like us to consider to help you, please ask.

8. Your conversation will be handled sensitively. They may need to discuss the issues and possible solutions with other senior leaders or an occupational health GP. Those people will be subject to duties of confidentiality.
9. We will work hard to balance your needs with those of your colleagues, however on occasions we may not be able to find a solution that works for everyone.
10. We will not talk to your colleagues, other than those included in 8 above, about the menopause-related difficulties you are having unless you ask us to or agree that we can.
11. We will keep notes of the things we discuss and will comply with our data protection responsibilities in respect of the information that passes between us. This is in line with our Data Protection Policy.
12. After your initial meeting with one of the people listed in 1.3, and periodically after that, we may carry out health and safety risk assessments and/or seek advice from occupational health.

### *Step 3*

13. Taking account of any specialist advice, we will agree with you the adjustments that we will make.
14. We will meet with you to make sure that the adjustments are working for you and for us. If any modifications are needed, or if anything new needs to be put in place, we will discuss that with you.

### *Step 4*

15. We will meet with you on an ongoing basis to check that your symptoms are being managed effectively.
16. You may find that your symptoms change over time. You should tell us if that happens so that we can look at making further or alternative adjustments. Once your symptoms pass, we would expect you to tell us, and we may discuss with you removing the adjustments that had been put in place.
17. We may need to consult with occupational health at various points to ensure everything is being done that should be done.

## **5 SOME RESOURCES**

1. The NHS website has some good, basic information about the menopause:  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
2. The British Menopause Society:  
<https://thebms.org.uk>

3. Women's Health Concern:

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

You can also download a free app to help you manage and track your symptoms, access personalised expert advice and obtain support:

<https://balance>

<https://healthandher.com>