

Menstrual Health and Menopause Policy

Amey is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive workplace for all employees. This includes providing support for those who may be experiencing menstrual health issues or going through menopause. We understand the importance of addressing these issues and are dedicated to ensuring that our employees feel comfortable and supported in the workplace.

Introduction

Menstrual health and the menopause is a topic that many of us don't feel comfortable talking about openly. Perhaps that's because we don't know much about it or simply because we're embarrassed. But we think it's time to change that so that our people feel comfortable about having these discussions.

This policy provides a brief overview of the menstrual health and menopause issues that affect employees and outlines the support and resources available to them. The purpose of the policy is to create a safe and inclusive work environment that respects the needs and well-being of all employees.

We want to raise awareness, break down the stigma and reduce the embarrassment and hesitancy in discussing menstrual health and the menopause in the workplace.

Scope

The policy applies to all employees, regardless of their gender identity, who experience menstruation or menopause.

Definitions

Perimenopause

Some people may experience changes in their menstrual cycle before reaching menopause. This is known as perimenopause and can last from a few months to several years. During this time, the periods may become irregular, heavier, lighter, shorter, or longer than usual. Some people may also have spotting or bleeding between periods or miss periods altogether. These changes are caused by fluctuations in the levels of estrogen and progesterone, the hormones that regulate the menstrual cycle. Perimenopause ends when a person has not had a period for 12 consecutive months, which marks the onset of menopause.

Menopause

Menopause is the natural biological process that marks the end of a woman's reproductive years. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 but can happen earlier or later.

During menopause, a woman's ovaries stop producing eggs and her body produces less of the hormones oestrogen and progesterone, which can result in a variety of physical and mental symptoms.

Menopause is confirmed when a person has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

Post-menopause

Post-menopause is the time after menopause. A woman who is post-menopausal (more than a year since periods) may still experience menopausal symptoms for many years.

Menstrual health/periods

Menstrual health refers to the regularity, frequency, and overall well-being of a person's menstrual cycle. It encompasses a range of factors, including access to menstrual products, education about menstruation, and the ability to manage menstrual symptoms. Good menstrual health is important for overall reproductive health and can impact a person's quality of life.

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is when you regularly have a range of symptoms in the days before your periods. Up to 4 out of 10 people have premenstrual syndrome that is severe enough to affect their quality of daily life.

Symptoms

Menopausal symptoms

Menopause can cause various symptoms that affect a person's physical and emotional well-being. Some of the common symptoms include:

- Hot flashes: sudden sensations of heat in the face, neck, and chest, often accompanied by sweating and flushing
- Night sweats: hot flashes that occur during sleep and can disrupt sleep quality
- Vaginal dryness: reduced moisture and elasticity in the vaginal tissues, which can cause discomfort, itching, burning, and pain during sexual activity
- Mood changes: increased irritability, anxiety, depression, or mood swings
- Cognitive changes: difficulties with memory, concentration, and learning
- Urinary problems: increased frequency, urgency, or leakage of urine, as well as increased risk of urinary tract infections
- Sexual problems: decreased libido, arousal, and orgasm
- Weight gain: changes in metabolism and body fat distribution, especially around the abdomen
- Skin and hair changes: thinning and dryness of the skin and hair, as well as increased facial hair growth
- Osteoporosis: loss of bone density and strength, which can increase the risk of fractures
- Cardiovascular problems: increased risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart disease

Not all people experience the same symptoms or severity of symptoms during menopause. Some people may have mild or no symptoms, while others may have severe or debilitating symptoms. The duration and intensity of symptoms can also vary from person to person. Some symptoms may last for a few years, while others may persist indefinitely.

Around 1 in every 10 women experience symptoms for up to 12 years.

There are various treatment options available to manage menopause symptoms, such as hormone therapy, non-hormonal medications, herbal remedies, lifestyle changes, and alternative therapies. The choice of treatment depends on the individual's preferences, medical history, and overall health.

Period symptoms

Many people have pain during their periods. Symptoms can include muscle cramps in your back or lower tummy. Some people can feel quite unwell during their periods and have heavy bleeding. Heavy periods are more common with age. But they can also be caused by other medical conditions, such as fibroids (non-cancerous growths in the womb), thyroid disease or endometriosis (a painful condition where tissue normally found lining the womb grows in other places). These conditions can cause more health problems if they are not diagnosed and treated. The blood loss from heavy periods can also lead to anaemia in 6 out of 10 people. Anaemia causes symptoms such as tiredness and headaches. In fact, a survey of those with heavy periods found that common symptoms included feeling sick, anxious, depressed and being anaemic.

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)

The symptoms will vary from person to person. Physical symptoms can include:

- breast tenderness
- bloating and weight gain
- clumsiness
- headaches

But you may also have:

- mood swings
- anxiety or depression
- tiredness and lack of energy
- feeling out of control
- irritability, aggression and anger
- difficulty sleeping
- food cravings

Manager support

Managers don't need to be experts, they simply need an understanding of how menopause or menstruation might affect some women and a willingness to have an open conversation, particularly in regard to the practical needs of the employee. Championing employees to feel comfortable to be completely themselves and speak freely can have a huge positive effect.

People are more likely to confide in managers who treat them respectfully and make time to discuss issues properly. If people feel able to have open conversations about their menopausal or menstrual symptoms, then managers will be better able to put in place practical measures to help them continue to work and perform to the best of their abilities.

In some cases, menopausal symptoms can be so serious that they affect a person's performance at work. In this situation, you should discuss potential workplace adjustments with the employee. To assist you in doing this you could ask employees to complete the self-identification of menopausal symptoms assessment or you could complete a formal risk assessment. Once reasonable adjustments have been identified you can document them in Amey's Reasonable Adjustments passport.

Six out of every 10 women experiencing menopausal symptoms say it has a negative impact on their work and up to 4 out of 10 people have premenstrual tension that is severe enough to affect their quality of life. With the right support, women do not need to press pause, struggle through, or leave their careers during this natural transition. Many women will continue to suffer in silence unless we break the taboo and start talking openly about menstrual health and the menopause at work.

How to open up conversations

It can be difficult starting a conversation about something as personal as periods or menopause. Try and make sure that:

- meetings are held in a private area where you won't be interrupted
- you reassure people at the outset that all discussions are confidential
- colleagues feel supported by showing that you take period or menopause problems seriously
- you believe them when they explain how they are affected by them
- you acknowledge that some people may feel more comfortable discussing such personal issues with someone else

Try not to be offended if someone doesn't want to talk about their periods or menopause. Some colleagues may not feel comfortable discussing their symptoms.

Sickness absence trigger points

We use absence triggers points to help us manage periods of absence appropriately and consistently across the business.

Our trigger points are:-

- 3 instances of sickness absence or a total of 8 or more days absence in any 12-month rolling period. Where an absence lasts or is expected to last for 3 continuous weeks or more, people managers should follow the long-term sickness absence process.

Where sickness absence is as a result of a long-term health condition or relates to a gender specific issue, pregnancy, menopause, PMS or endometriosis or an individual is undergoing gender transitioning, people managers must seek advice and guidance from Croner regarding whether to disregard specific absences or adjust the trigger points. It may also be necessary to seek advice and guidance from our OH provider.

Top tips

Normalise periods and menopause

Dispel any taboos by making sure your whole team knows how issues with PMS, periods and menopause can affect people at work. Show empathy and understanding.

Stay healthy

We encourage you to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms such as:

- Eating healthily
- Drinking plenty of water
- Exercising regularly

Ask your teams what they need; have regular 121s

Be aware that Transgender and non-binary colleagues may also experience symptoms

Complete Amey's Reasonable Adjustments Passport

Raise awareness and signpost to the support available

- Free period products
- CBT 5-week course
- EAP
- My Menopause Centre

What support can Amey offer?

Menstrual course

Understanding the menstrual cycle, every day, can help to manage period pain and ease menstrual suffering, benefitting the way we work and live. Grace and Green, Amey's partner for period products offer a free Menstrual Cycle Support Course which may provide some useful information so that people can gain a wider understanding of their own cycle. It can be accessed here: [Adults | Ease menstrual suffering \(menstrualcyclesupport.com\)](https://www.adultscyclecare.com/)

Menopause coach

A menopause coach plays a vital role in supporting individuals navigating the physical, emotional, and psychological changes associated with menopause. They provide personalised guidance and strategies to help manage symptoms, improve well-being, and enhance overall quality of life.

Amey's menopause coach can offer employees a compassionate and understanding approach to help empower you to create a balanced and fulfilling life during this transition.

If you feel uncomfortable talking to your manager about your symptoms you can instead contact Amey's Menopause coach by sending an email to menopause@amey.co.uk

My Menopause Centre

We have partnered with My Menopause Centre, who are rated 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission to provide medical support to Amey employees requiring extra perimenopause or menopausal support in addition to the support offered by their GP.

Employees can book an appointment online or by telephone at a time that is convenient for them. They will be sent a confirmatory email with a video link. The doctor (menopause expert) listens to the colleague's story and takes a comprehensive medical history over the course of a 45-minute consultation. They'll talk through their symptoms, arrange any necessary tests, and discuss evidence based treatment options. By the end of the session, the patient will have a comprehensive personalised, holistic menopause treatment plan. This will be sent to them within 5 days, and they can have a private prescription or take this to their NHS GP and ask for a prescription issued there if one has been recommended. The information will not be shared with Amey.

In addition to the online appointment you are able to obtain a wealth of information from My Menopause Centre's knowledge bank, which is available here:

<https://www.mymenopausecentre.com/knowledge/menopause-explained/>

For details of how to book an appointment please see the My Menopause Centre flowchart. Once approval is in place go to [Landing Page - Amey | My Menopause Centre](#) to book your appointment. If you feel uncomfortable about having a discussion with your people manager you could contact Amey's Menopause Coach instead who can seek authorisation on your behalf.

Before commencing an appointment with My Menopause Centre, it is requested that you read their terms and conditions [Terms and Conditions \(Supply\) | My Menopause Centre](#)

Employee Assistance Programme and Menopause CBT 5-week course

Amey's EAP provider is able to provide a 5-week Menopause CBT course. The course includes the following modules:

1: Menopause overview Session

2: Identifying triggers. Stress & lifestyle, challenging thought, pacing activities, problem solving, relaxation & physical activity Session

3: Managing hot flushes, managing thoughts and beliefs, managing behaviours, healthy activities Session

4: Managing night sweats, stressful thoughts about sleep, sleep stages, sleep needs, sleep hygiene, tackling worries Session

5: Maintaining gains, being kind to yourself, support networks, relaxation, mindfulness & physical activity

To access the menopause CBT course please contact EAP who will assess whether the course is suitable to meet your needs. You can contact EAP by calling their confidential counselling and information line 0800 130 3414 which is available 24/7, 365 days a year to help with all issues and provide expert guidance and counselling whatever the problem.

Health Assured Wisdom App

This is a fantastic free resource available to all Amey employees – download the Health Assured Wisdom mobile App and register using code MHA147812.

This App is free to all Amey employees and is full of great features designed to support your mental wellbeing with mood trackers, articles, and helpful videos.

Complete the Reasonable Adjustment Passport

We want to ensure that our people who are going through the menopause are given the right support to thrive in the workplace. The reasonable adjustments passport is a record of any adjustments and support measures that have been agreed to help support a colleague overcome any barriers at work.

For people who may benefit from additional support, the passport is a good starting point for an open conversation with your people manager. It allows you to record what support and adjustments you have agreed. The reasonable adjustment passport is available here [reasonable-adjustments-passport-july-2024.docx \(live.com\)](#)

Flexible working

Providing flexible working arrangements where possible, such as allowing employees to flex their hours or working patterns with flexible start and end times, regular breaks and modified job roles, will help accommodate fluctuating energy levels.

Sanitary products

We will ensure that sanitary products are available in toilets at Amey offices.

Menopause support network

Amey has a Menopause support network on Viva Engage where colleagues can meet and share experiences and offer support. The network usually meets monthly.

Useful links

[My Menopause Centre Flowchart](#)

[Landing Page - Amey | My Menopause Centre](#)

<https://www.mymenopausecentre.com/knowledge/menopause-explained/>

[Menstrual Cycle Support: embrace every day](#)

[Reasonable adjustments passport](#)

The [NHS menopause webpages](#) includes advice on symptoms and treatment

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has published helpful [people manager resource](#).

[ACAS](#) has published support documents for organisations on the menopause at work.

[Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf \(fom.ac.uk\)](#)

Revision status

REVISION	DATE	AMENDMENT	CONTENT OWNER	MANDATED BY
1	October 2024	New policy	Women @ Amey	Nicola Hill