**NSEAD advice on Menopause for leaders in all education settings**

Employers are key to supporting people going through the menopause in the workplace.

But rest assured, you can access support – collaborate with fellow leaders, your governors, any elected workplace TU reps and health and safety reps as well as your staff. This allows for the development of a supportive environment for people experiencing menopause symptoms at work.

Consider the many benefits of supporting menopausal people – with your leadership team and your board of governors:

* likely to be able to retain your experienced, qualified, committed and effective staff
* improved morale
* contributes to staff wellbeing
* demonstrates transparency and improves trust
* increased motivation
* increased staffing stability
* reduces disruption to students
* shows compliance with Equality Act 2010

**From a practical perspective - how can your staff be supported?**

* Support requests for flexible working – e.g., support requests to reduce hours or change hours temporarily.
* You can ask staff to identify changes they need over their immediate working environment – this will empower staff and reduce requests to the leadership team.
* Ensure that menopausal people have easy access to cold water, toilet and washing facilities.
* Provide storage facilities for sanitary products in the toilet and washing spaces.
* Provide a secure space to store an emergency bag, a towel and a change of clothes.
* Demonstrate an awareness of the impact of the menopause in the workplace - and improve menopause awareness amongst staff through training, meetings, newsletters and the like.
* Encourage the setting up of support mechanisms such as colleague support groups or buddying schemes to encourage people to share experiences, any tips and to overcome any obstacles that may be being experienced.
* Ensure that risk assessments take account of the needs of menopausal people and that measures or adjustments effectively remove or control risks.
* Ensure that staff are consulted on the risk assessment needs and measures.
* Designate a member of SLT to be responsible for the menopause risk assessment.
* Nurture a climate where people feel able to disclose their condition, to seek advice, support and any appropriate adjustments.
* Consider how the menopause might impact on appraisal or pay progression for teachers. In a practical sense this may mean adjusting objectives to take account of menopause-related absence or where menopause symptoms may have impacted on performance.
* Be supportive of people who are absent for menopause related reasons – adjust any absence monitoring arrangements to reduce stress. This would be considered as a reasonable adjustment.
* Model positive behaviour and challenge negative menopause stereotypes. Encourage your colleagues to do the same.
* Demonstrate your support for older women and people going through the menopause – eg, by actively listening and supporting requests for counselling or other emotional support.

Naturally, every woman will have a different experience of the menopause. However, fostering a supportive workplace culture will provide significant help.

If any colleague wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or even if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

* allow and make time to have the conversation – without distraction
* find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality
* encourage them to speak openly and honestly
* suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below)
* agree actions, and how to implement them
* agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
* ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor
* review actions and follow up agreed adjustments.

**Symptoms and support**

Symptoms can manifest physically and psychologically. Support for women should be considered as detailed below.

Hot flushes

* Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan or moving near a window, or away from a heat source.
* Provide easy access to drinking water.
* Encourage use of the staff room for breaks.

Heavy/light periods

* Have permanent access to washroom facilities.
* Ensure sanitary products are available.

Urogenital problems - This will include an increased frequency and urgency to pass urine, with a need to access toilet facilities more frequently and to drink more fluids. Suitable adjustments may include:

* providing ready access to suitable toilet facilities
* providing ready access to suitable washing facilities
* allowing more frequent breaks to go to the toilet
* providing easy access to drinking water.

Headaches

* Have ease of access to fresh water.
* Use the staff room as a quiet place to work when not teaching or when time out is required.
* Have time out to take medication if needed.

Low mood

* Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
* Identify a ‘buddy’ for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area.
* Identify a ‘time out space’ to be able to go to ‘clear their head’.

Loss of confidence

* Ensure there are regular al development discussions.
* Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues.
* Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Poor concentration

* Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse.
* Review task allocation and workload.
* Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment.
* Offer quiet space to work.

Anxiety

* Identify a ‘buddy’ for the colleague to talk to – outside of work their area – ask the health and wellbeing committee for support.
* Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques.
* Encourage your colleague to undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Panic attacks

* Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
* Identify a ‘buddy’ outside of work area.
* Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Muscular aches and bone and joint pain - For individuals experiencing these symptoms, moving and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable. Suitable adjustments may include;

* Making any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.
* Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.
* If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an occupational health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.