CARDIFF COUNCIL

GUIDELINES ON THE MENOPAUSE AND THE WORKPLACE

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is available in Welsh

Introduction

1. This guidance is intended to make managers aware of menopause related issues and how they can affect their employees, either for individuals experiencing this natural stage of life condition or those who are perhaps affected indirectly, for example, line managers and colleagues or partners of those experiencing the condition.

2. The menopause is often seen as a private matter as a result there is sometimes a lack of awareness and it can be regarded as a taboo subject in the workplace. Employees may feel they are the only person affected, in reality this is seldom the case. By raising awareness of the menopause this should help to create an environment where women and men feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and if necessary ask for adjustments at work.

The Menopause

3. The menopause, also known as the 'change of life', marks the time when a woman's periods stop. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55 and the average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK is 52. In Cardiff Council 24% of our female employees are in this age range.

4. Peri-menopause is the time that leads to the menopause when many women may experience symptoms. A premature menopause can also occur, with periods stopping before the age of 40, either naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or its treatment. It should also be noted that some women experience sudden menopause after surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

5. Periods generally become less frequent, the odd period is missed and then they stop altogether. A woman is said to have reached the menopause once she has not had a period for one year. After this point, she can be described as post-menopausal. Overall, this phase of hormonal change and associated symptoms can last from four to eight years.

6. For some, going through the menopause may be uneventful and may not impact on their working life but for others it may become increasingly difficult to function effectively at work and their working conditions may exacerbate their symptoms.

7. This time can lead to changes in a woman's health and may also lead to physical and emotional changes. These can affect how a woman does her work and her relationship with her manager and colleagues. At work the symptoms, can cause embarrassment, diminish confidence and can be stressful to deal with.

8. Symptoms associated with the menopause may include:

    - Hot flushes.
    - Palpitations.
    - Night sweats.
    - Sleep disturbance.
    - Fatigue.
    - Poor concentration/memory difficulties.
    - Irritability.
    - Mood disturbance.
    - Skin irritation and dryness.
    - Aches and pains.
    - Heavy blood loss.
    - Weight gain
    - Uncharacteristic behaviour

Post Menopause

9. Post menopause is diagnosed as when a women has gone without a period for 12 months. 10.2% of the Council's workforce are females age 55 plus and therefore fall into this category. Whilst symptoms may ease, post- menopausal women are at an increased risk for a number of health conditions such as osteoporosis and heart disease.

Male Menopause

10. Although the menopause has a specific meaning for women, men may also experience similar symptoms to those outlined above. The male menopause sometimes called the 'andropause' is associated with testosterone decline and usually occurs in the late 40's or early 50's.

How to support employees going through the Menopause.

11. Employees are more inclined to disclose health-related conditions if they regard managers as supportive and where there is a culture of openness about health issues. It is important for managers to be supportive and be aware of the menopausal symptoms, so that women do not feel embarrassed to approach them and discuss how the menopause is affecting their health.

12. The menopause can affect a woman's confidence. It can be extremely daunting and embarrassing talking to someone who has no idea about the menopause. However managers can be sympathetic to these needs and make suitable work adjustments if they are aware of a problem. It is important that employees discuss their practical needs with their line manager, or another manager they feel more comfortable talking to, or HR People Services perhaps requesting to speak to a female member of staff.

13. It is good practice to ask all employees about any health conditions that they may have or be experiencing. This could be undertaken as part of regular one to one meetings, such conversations can identify support at work that can help women remain fully productive. It can also be an opportunity to encourage employees to seek medical help from their GP if their symptoms are having a significant adverse effect on their health and wellbeing or if relevant a referral to Occupational Health. Any specific needs that are identified (including agreed reasonable adjustments) should be recorded and reviewed at least annually. Managers will need to maintain confidentiality in handling health information relating to the menopause as with other conditions.

12. Many women will consider selp-help strategies such as exercise, herbal remedies and changes to lifestyle to help alleviate symptoms. Additionally reasonable adjustments should be considered for women currently going through the menopause and experiencing symptoms, which are impacting on their work. This will include those experiencing peri-menopause symptoms. (See Reasonable Adjustments Guidance).

13. It is good practice to make adjustments that are 'reasonable' for any employee with health conditions, whether or not they may be covered by the Equality Act. Advice can be sought from Occupational Health. The employee may also be able to advise what adjustments would best help them.

14. The purpose of a reasonable adjustment is removing barriers wherever possible that get in the way of an employee doing their job (e.g. enable women experiencing menopause symptoms to keep doing their job). The adjustment should be tailored to address the barriers/issues experienced specifically by that employee, and should be identified through the discussions with the individual and Occupational Health (where appropriate).

15. The following adjustments/options could be considered:

- If accommodation allows provide private area/spaces available for women to rest /recover /make a telephone call to personal or professional support. Women going through the menopause may need to manage the impact of the symptoms, a private space to rest temporarily, cry or talk with a colleague before they can return to their workspace.

- Flexibility and increased frequency in breaks - flexibility to take breaks or rest breaks will enable people managing impairments / conditions or pain to contribute more fully in the workplace. A member of staff with medication may want to take it in quiet / private space at specific times to maintain health and

wellbeing. Some may just need time to walk around and ease pain in arthritic joints / back pain.

- Where possible, facilitate a comfortable working environment for those suffering menopausal symptoms. This will include adequate drinking water supplies, and adequate access to toilet facilities.

- Employees going through the menopause may request to be positioned near a door or window or maybe provided with a desk fan where possible. Positioning within the office or in an area where they can get a breeze should be considered. Consider the use of window blinds in areas that do not benefit from shade.

- Temperature, lighting and other factors can affect the general working environment. Temperature control may be a reasonable adjustment or the provision of a desk fan or heater which can be controlled by the individual.

  Flexible working arrangements may be considered for those that are experiencing debilitating symptoms. (Refer to Flexible Working Policy) Menopause symptoms can increase in stressful situations and when the person is tired symptoms can increase. This also enables employees to work productively and manage the impact of their impairments. This may include flexibility for women who need medical treatment or to attend clinics, hospital or appointments.

- If possible ensure public facing employees including those who work directly with service users have access to a quiet area for a short break to manage any symptoms.

- A list of organisations that offer support is detailed below. In addition, the TUC and the trade unions also have information available to assist their members.

- Further advice on health and well-being can be found on the intranet.

Related Documents

Attendance and Wellbeing Policy 1.CM.049
Flexible Working Policy 1.CM.088
Reasonable Adjustments Guidance 5.C.275
Stress Management Policy 1.CM.118
Stress Risk Assessment Code of Guidance 1.CM.113

Support Organisations

Menopause Matters: www.menopausematters.co.uk

NHS: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

Menopause.org.uk: www.menopause.org.uk

British Menopause Society: http://thebms.org.uk

WebMD: www.webmd.boots.com

Simply Hormones: www.simplyhormones.com

Women's Health Concerns:www.womenshealthconcerns.org

The Daisy Network: www.daisynetwork.org.uk

http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/

Employee Assistance Programme – Carefirst – This free phone telephone service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. All calls are answered directly by a team of qualified and experienced counsellors. Professional information and advice services are also provided by a separate team of information specialists plus there is access to a web based information service. Telephone 0800 174319
http://cmsweb/cardiff/content.asp?id=40976

Employee Counselling Service – The Employee Counselling Service (ECS) offers free and confidential counselling to anyone who is employed by the City of Cardiff Council. Telephone 029 2078 8301
http://cmsweb/cardiff/content.asp?id=11153&d1=0