





MENOPAUSE POLICY
Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club

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MENOPAUSE POLICY

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Introduction

This policy is designed to raise awareness of menopause transition and provide information and support for those who are directly or indirectly affected. It therefore contains information relevant to employees, their managers, and other colleagues.

The aim of the policy is to:

- Make managers aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work
- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner
- Raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause and enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs
- Outline support and reasonable adjustments available

What is the Menopause?

The menopause is a natural event in most women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. It can often feel very isolating and

many are reluctant to let anyone know that they're experiencing it, especially in the workplace, and therefore fail to access the best available support.

Wolves are committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

This policy is part of Wolves commitment to equality and diversity. We are committed to creating a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of Wolves as an employer of choice.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all staff who are employed at Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club.

Definitions

- Menopause - A biological stage in life when you have not had a period for 12 consecutive months.
- Perimenopause - The time leading up to the end of your periods when changes start to happen.
- Premature menopause - Can happen naturally, or because of illness or surgery.

Potential Symptoms

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and perimenopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms, however every person experiences menopause differently. Some may not need to make any changes to their duties.

- During menopause, the brain and mood can be affected, causing depression and anxiety, sleep problems, night sweats, fatigue and/or dizziness, 'brain fog' (reduced concentration, poor information retention and a reduced ability to learn), unexplained mood swings, irritability and emotional outbursts.
- These symptoms can impact on an individual's performance in terms of coping strategies and reduced ability to deal with the pressure deadlines and priorities. They may also experience a lack of confidence, anxiety or panic disorder.
- Hair and nails can become thin, dry and brittle, and bleeding gums, dry mouths or taste changes and strange oral sensations may occur.
- The heart and lungs can be affected, causing palpitations and an increased risk of heart disease, or new/worsened allergies.

- Irregular periods brought about by an unpredictable pre-menstrual tension and menstrual cycle can cause heavy bleeding, water retention and bloating, and general skin itchiness and formication (which feels like crawling under the skin), dermatitis or thinning skin.
- Problems with muscles, joints, nerves and bones can lead to muscle pain and weakness, joint pain, osteoporosis / loss of bone density and nerve function may be affected.
- Sudden changes to body temperature can also result in sweats and flushes, sudden heat or facial redness.
- Other symptoms of the menopause can include loss of libido, vaginal dryness and or atrophy, weight gain, incontinence, anaemia, breast pain and headaches.
- Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause, with menopausal symptoms sometimes experienced during this time. For other people, the menopause can naturally occur early or result from medical treatment such as surgery, hysterectomy, chemotherapy, aromatase inhibitors (oestrogen suppressants) and treatment for endometriosis.

Support and Advice to employees

As employees work through perimenopause, menopause and beyond, this can mean managing the demands of work and home life whilst also dealing with sometimes severe symptoms and other issues. Wolves is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to positively support staff experiencing the menopause.

Wolves are committed to raise awareness of the support group “pause to chat” to all individuals affected by menopause, whether that is personally or a family member/friend to provide support and to signpost. Confidentiality to be maintained at all times.

Speaking up

If symptoms are causing problems at work, you should speak confidentially to your manager at an early stage, to ensure the symptoms can be treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification will also help your manager determine the most appropriate course of action to support your individual needs. A plan should be agreed with your manager, and where appropriate, it should include details of the agreed adjustments.

If you do not wish to discuss the issue with your direct line manager, you may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague, an alternative manager, Wolves Wellbeing team and/or support group.

Some individuals may not be aware that they are going through menopause transition, so GPs can arrange for blood tests to be undertaken to confirm menopause. Employees are however encouraged to consult their GP for any symptoms that are causing concern, as many of them can relate to other medical conditions.

Advice to and responsibilities of Managers

Although the menopause usually impacts those in their 40s to 60s; it can impact younger people, partners and families, and those who are transitioning. As a manager, you have a duty of care to all your employees, and to support anyone affected by the menopause in the workplace either directly or indirectly.

Menopause can challenge both physical and mental wellbeing, in some cases presenting as mood swings, difficulty concentrating or memory lapses, anxiety or depression, pain and headaches, sleep disorders or fatigue.

Managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities.

When an employee discloses menopause-related concerns, you should gain an understanding of their likely support needs.

- Ensure that all information shared by the employee is treated in the strictest confidence and is not shared further without their consent.
- Take account of individual and business needs when dealing with requests for special leave, being mindful of the importance of being supportive of attendance at appointments
- Outline the support available to the employee within Wolves
- Treat all discussions sensitively, professionally and confidentially.
- Support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate. Workplace adjustments are used to remove barriers or a disadvantage and can be helpful during menopause for agreeing and recording temporary or permanent changes. Any adjustments agreed should be recorded in writing with a copy provided to the employee. Where a review period is agreed, a follow up meeting should be diarised with both the manager and employee, to ensure it takes place at the agreed time.

Advice to Colleagues

Traditionally, the menopause has not been widely discussed in workplaces, with some people finding it difficult and embarrassing to raise the subject. Fortunately, due to increased media coverage and the availability of online support and guidance, conversations around managing the menopause in the workplace are becoming more normalised, and this policy aims to support this.

It is also important that if a colleague speaks to you in confidence, this should be respected, and the information kept confidential unless they give you express permission to share it.

Data Confidentiality

We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our data protection policy. Data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

Reasonable Adjustments

Wolves not only has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees, but also aims to facilitate an open, understanding, working environment.

As the symptoms associated with menopause can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work, Wolves commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support will be available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms, including the facilitation of flexible working, wherever possible. **(Refer to Wolves Flexible Working Policy)**

Where employees are required to work onsite, consideration will be given to the following

- Flexible and easy access to bathroom and changing facilities
- Ensuring there is good ventilation (e.g. a fan or opening window or adjustable air conditioning)
- Review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators
- Fitting blinds to windows
- Access to cold drinks
- Regular breaks in a private and quiet space, including flexibility for the staff member around the taking of breaks
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments

This is not a definitive list of adjustments

We will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010. The menopause primarily affects women and those who have transitioned as women. However, anyone experiencing menopause symptoms or supporting colleagues who are experiencing symptoms will be supported through this policy, regardless of gender identity.

(Refer to Wolves Equality and Diversity policy)

Review and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner depending upon legislation or business changes. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed through the staff intranet. Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence, but to consider:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP
- Discussing symptoms with your manager or another colleague or support group and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments.
- Contacting the Employee Assistance Provider.

Employees are also encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms such as:

- Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms, in keeping bones healthy and in not gaining weight

- Drinking plenty of water
- Exercising regularly - to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood and maintain aerobic fitness levels
- Not smoking – to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions such as cancer, heart disease and stroke
- Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food – all of which can trigger hot flushes
- Having access to natural light
- Staying cool at night – wearing loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats
- Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation – to reduce stress levels and improve mood
- Trying vaginal lubricant or moisturizer to reduce the symptoms of vaginal dryness –available either on prescription or over the counter from pharmacies.

Alternative sources of support

- **Menopause matters**, which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options. [Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)
- **The Daisy Network charity**, which provides support for those experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency. [The Midlands \(daisynetwork.org\)](#)
- **The Menopause Café**, which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause. [Gather to eat cake, drink and discuss menopause \(menopausecafe.net\)](#)
- **NHS Health A-Z – Menopause.** [Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- **NICE** [Overview | Menopause: diagnosis and management | Guidance | NICE](#)
- **NHS - Male Menopause.** [The 'male menopause' - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)