



4.30 Menopause

Written By

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Aim

Bermagui Preschool is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here. This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is not contractual, and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and it isn't always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work. Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden'. We want everyone to understand what menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women, men should be aware too.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently have good conversations, and are clear on the Preschool's policy and practices.
- Educate and inform staff about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women at work.
- Ensure that women suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it, and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles or studies.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Assure women that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

Strategies

It is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe. Women should be advised to seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not exclusively, hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some women also experience difficulty sleeping.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health;
- Being open and honest in conversations with other staff and/ or the Nominated Supervisor if necessary.
- If a member of staff is unable to speak with other staff and/ or the Nominated Supervisor if necessary, they can speak to self-designated support person if necessary.
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment;
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues;
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Nominated Supervisor should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally. Find an appropriate room/ space to preserve confidentiality. Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters.
- Use the policy collaboratively to review, formulate, agree and implement a plan with the individual on how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required. Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented. Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates. Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.
- Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, discuss a referral to external sources for further advice.. Review external support advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Update the action plan, and continue to review.

Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support for women should be considered as detailed below:

Hot Flashes

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan, air conditioning, moving near a window or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Be allowed to adapt clothing, such as by removing a jacket;
- Have access to a bathroom for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

Heavy/light Periods

- Have permanent access to bathroom facilities (located at Bermagui Preschool, and the adjoining Bermagui Community Centre);
- Access to alternative clothing if changing clothing is required. Ensure storage space is available for a change of clothing.
- Ensure sanitary products are available in the bathroom.

Headaches

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Difficulty Sleeping

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly suffering from a lack of sleep.

Low Mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – in or outside of the work area;
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head';
- Contact external support if necessary

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions;
- Have regular protected time with their Nominated Supervisor 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, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly;
- Review task allocation and workload;
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment;
- Offer quiet space to work;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open spaces;
- Reduce interruptions;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Anxiety

- Promote counselling services and support
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – in or outside of work;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- 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' in or outside of work;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.
- Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP or support. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

Evaluation

Continuous improvement of our service occurs where there is reflection and constructive feedback given from the service community which results in positive change and improvement.

Menopause is managed well, lead to quality improvement and a supported and harmonious work environment.

Relevant Legislation

Federal and NSW Equal Opportunity Legislation.

Resources & References

<https://www.menopause.org.au/members/ims-menopause-live/901-menopause-and-work>
http://menopauseatwork.com.au/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIgoXSxriI3wIVx5CfCh2fyAsKEAAYASAAEgKXIifD_BwE

Relevant Documentation

Staffing and Employment Policies
Equity and Inclusive Practice Policy

Date Adopted:

November 2017

Review Date:

November 2020