



# **University of Limerick**

## **Menopause**

### **Procedure**

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This procedure sets out the commitments of the University of Limerick to employees and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

## 1.2 Scope

### 1.2.1 To whom does the procedure apply?

This procedure applies to all employees and particularly those experiencing the menopause regardless of gender identity or gender expression and should be interpreted in an inclusive way.

### 1.2.2 In what situations does the procedure apply?

This procedure applies in all situations where employees are experiencing symptoms of menopause.

### 1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the procedure is implemented and monitored?

The Human Resources Director is responsible for ensuring procedure review and for ensuring that the procedure is implemented as approved.

## 1.3 Definitions

### 1.3.1 Menopause

#### **Menopause**

The word “menopause” throughout this procedure will refer to the various stages and types of changes that an individual may go through at this time and includes perimenopause, post menopause, early menopause, premature menopause, and induced menopause. Menopause refers to the time when menstruation (periods) stops, and the ovaries lose their reproductive function. Usually, this occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. The average age that this occurs in Ireland is 51 years. ☐ Menstruation may start to become less frequent over a few months or years before they stop. Sometimes they can stop suddenly. In some cases, menstruation can become very heavy in the years coming up to menopause. Natural menopause is deemed to have occurred after 12 consecutive months without menstruation for which there is no other obvious physiological or pathological cause and in the absence of clinical intervention.

#### **Perimenopause**

Perimenopause (sometimes known as menopause transition) refers to the leadup to menopause, when the signs and symptoms of menopause are first observed and ends one year after the final menstrual period. The age in which this begins varies, but the average age is 45 years old. However, some individuals start to experience symptoms in their 30s or rarely even younger. Perimenopause can last several years and can affect physical, emotional, mental and social well-being. Typically, perimenopause symptoms can start up to 7 years before the last menstrual period.

### **Post-menopause**

A woman is considered post-menopausal if she has not had her period for an entire year (12 months). They are postmenopausal for the rest of their life. In this third phase of the menopause transition, they may still experience symptoms, commonly for a further five to seven years, though many experience symptoms for longer than this.

### **Early menopause**

Early menopause is when an individual's menstruation stops before the age of 45. It can happen by itself or as a side effect of some treatments.

### **Premature menopause**

Premature menopause, also known as premature ovarian insufficiency (POI), is when an individual experiences menopause before the age of 40. It is uncommon (<1% of population), it can have significant impact on health.

### **Induced menopause**

Induced menopause refers to menstrual periods that stop after surgical removal of the ovaries, chemotherapy or radiation damage to the ovaries, or from the use of other medications to intentionally induce menopause as part of the treatment of certain diseases. Induced menopause can happen at any age, pre natural menopause.

For this procedure the term menopause is an inclusive term and includes menopause, perimenopause, post-menopause, early menopause, premature menopause and induced menopause.

## **2 Context**

### **2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context**

#### **2.1.1 Relevant legislation**

There are no laws in Ireland that expressly provide for employees experiencing menopause. However, protection is afforded under the protected characteristics as set out in the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2021.

## **3 Procedure Statements**

### **3.1 Principles for Menopause Procedure**

#### **3.1.1 Supportive Working Environment**

To foster an environment where the careers of staff experiencing the menopause are not negatively impacted and in which colleagues can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause without embarrassment and to lift any stigma associated with the menopause.

### **3.1.2 Raise Awareness**

To raise awareness of menopause related issues at work and enable individuals experiencing menopause to attend work and contribute their best whilst experiencing menopausal symptoms through the provision of supports and reasonable adjustments where it is possible to do so.

### **3.1.3 Enable Workplace Discussions**

To educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and how they can support work colleagues. That any discussions that take place are treated sensitively and confidentially and in a respectful manner and not disclosed without the express permission of the employee. The University recognises the importance of providing appropriate training to ensure that this procedure is understood and implemented. Accordingly, the University will provide training to line managers and information sessions for all staff aimed at increasing awareness of menopause.

### **3.1.4 Access to Support and Resources**

To ensure the needs of colleagues experiencing menopause are considered and know where to access supports and resources. Supporting employees experiencing menopausal symptoms in the same way as an employee with any ongoing health complaint.

## **4 Related Procedures for Menopause**

### **4.1 Roles and Responsibilities**

The following outlines the duties and responsibilities for Managers, Employees, Human Resources, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Health & Safety.

#### **- People managers are responsible for:**

- Ensuring they have a good understanding and awareness of menopause by familiarising themselves with the Menopause Procedure and attending any relevant training/awareness raising sessions.
- Being ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating it sensitively and professionally.
- Should an employee wish to talk about their experiences with menopause arrange a confidential meeting in a private space to meet and allow for sufficient time to listen.
- Considering, with the employee, how best they can be supported including any requests to accommodate changes at work that may be helpful to manage symptoms.
- Implementing Occupational Health advice and any recommendations where reasonably practicable (in instances when an employee is referred to Occupational Health).
- Meeting and consulting with the staff member to agree any required supports/reasonable accommodations, balancing the needs of the employee and the provision of service in accordance with University policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that agreed actions are implemented and ongoing dialogue occurs.
- Creating an inclusive and healthy culture where conversations about the menopause can occur and which allows people experiencing menopause to feel supported and valued in the workplace and colleagues to understand the menopause journey that colleagues may be on.

- A list of common systems and potential supports which may be agreed between staff and line management are available at Appendix 1. The list of symptoms and potential supports are intended as an aid to discussions and are not exhaustive. The University of Limerick recognises that that menopause may affect individuals in different ways, and the duration and severity of symptoms can differ significantly. As such, the University aims to provide flexible support options tailored to individual needs, ensuring that all employees feel respected, valued, and empowered to manage their well-being while maintaining their professional responsibilities. Once the supports/adjustments are agreed, they should be reviewed on a regular basis to evaluate the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place. A record of discussions between the employee and their line manager and the agreed workplace adjustments may be recorded via the *Menopause – Workplace Support/Reasonable Accommodations Discussion Record Form (Appendix 2)*. Completion of the form is optional as the form is intended as an aid to ensure meaningful discussion and completion of the form is not a requirement. In all case, written agreement should be noted following a meeting of any agreed accommodations and the review period.

- **Employees are responsible for:**

- Taking personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing and seeking medical advice if necessary.
- The onus regarding disclosure rests with the employee and if menopausal symptoms are impacting their workplace wellbeing, employees may wish to consider talking to their line manager. Where an employee does not wish to raise the matter with their direct line manager, they may also have discussions with the next level of line management. Supports/reasonable accommodations need to be considered and agreed with line management.
- Think about what adjustments/changes to the role would help alleviate the symptoms and discuss this with their line manager or other appropriate person.
- Familiarising themselves with the procedure and information provided.
- Being open in conversations with managers/HR and Occupational Health and keeping their manager informed of any changes to their health that impacts on their workplace duties and responsibilities.
- Being willing to support colleagues and understand any changes at work which have been agreed to support their colleagues as a result of menopausal symptoms.
- Complying with all the University policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity, ensuring that individuals are treated with respect and dignity and respect when experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

- **Human Resources are responsible for:**

- Offering guidance to people managers on the interpretation of this procedure.
- Supporting the creation of an inclusive and healthy culture where conversations about the menopause can occur and which allows people experiencing menopause to feel supported and valued in the workplace.
- Supporting and encouraging people managers to be equipped with the knowledge and awareness they need to support employees experiencing the menopause.
- Providing guidance to employees who have approached HR directly in relation to the supports available.
- Make referrals to occupational health as required.
- Signpost to supports such as the Employee Support Service
- HR may be contacted at: [compandbens@ul.ie](mailto:compandbens@ul.ie) or by contacting your HR Business Partner

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are responsible for:**
  - Continuing to support the discussion around the menopause through a variety of measures.
  - Championing and raising awareness of the impact of the menopause on those experiencing it.
  - Creating an inclusive and healthy culture where conversations about the menopause can occur and which allows people experiencing menopause to feel supported and valued in the workplace.
  - Helping managers and employees to have a greater understanding of the menopause so that they can support those on their menopause journey.
  - Supporting the implementation of this procedure and keeping it updated to ensure it remains in line with good practice and EDI principles.
  - Measuring the impact of initiatives through regular engagement with employees and managers.
  - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion may be contacted at [edi@ul.ie](mailto:edi@ul.ie)
  
- **University Health and Safety are responsible for:**
  - Supporting the creation of an inclusive and healthy culture where conversations about the menopause can occur and which allows people experiencing menopause to feel supported and valued in the workplace.
  - Supporting the provision of accommodations and supports that are helpful to managing symptoms.
  - Health & Safety may be contacted at [healthandsafetyquery@ul.ie](mailto:healthandsafetyquery@ul.ie)

## 5 Related Documents

- Employee Support Service
- University Sick Leave Scheme
- University of Limerick Health & Safety Statement
- Managing Attendance Procedure
- Policy and Procedure for Blended Working
- Flexible Working Hours Procedure
- Menopause – Workplace Support/Reasonable Accommodations Discussion Record Form

## 6 Appendix 1

<b>Table 1: Examples of Adjustments for Related Symptoms</b>	
<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Suggested Adjustments</b>
<b>Hot Flushes/Flashes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of a fan</li> <li>• Access to fresh drinking water</li> <li>• Access to a quiet area</li> <li>• Short- breaks to step out for fresh air</li> <li>• A workstation close to a window</li> </ul>
<b>Heavy Menstruation/Periods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy access to toilet/ facilities</li> <li>• Access/provision of changing facilities if needed</li> <li>• Flexibility to use these facilities as and when needed</li> <li>• Adjustment of duties as necessary and as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Insomnia / Difficulty Sleeping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible Working Hours as provided for under the UL Flexible Working Hours Procedure or allowing the staff member to work from home as provided for under the UL Blended Working Policy and Procedure are supports which may be considered.</li> </ul>
<b>Low Mood / Anxiety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest talking to their GP</li> <li>• Suggest speaking to Employee Support Service (free counselling)</li> <li>• Ask what might be helpful in terms of managing work</li> </ul>
<b>Isolation or Low Self Esteem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking coffee breaks with colleagues</li> <li>• Regular team engagement</li> <li>• Buddy system</li> <li>• Regular check ins and feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Brain Fog (memory/ concentration issues)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to one mentoring/coaching</li> <li>• Pacing of work</li> <li>• Keeping notes/using technology</li> <li>• Regular one to one check ins/Feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological Issues as it relates to menopause e.g. anxiety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UL Employee Support Service (free counselling 24/7) is available to all UL Employees. The ESS provides a non-judgmental, confidential and free service where every individual will be met with empathy and understanding. The ESS can provide a safe space to discuss the menopausal experience and to develop a client focused self-care plan.</li> </ul>

<b>Additional Supports for Consideration:</b>	
<b>Flexible Working Hours / Blended Working:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In addition, flexible working hours under the UL Flexible Working Hours Procedure or allowing the staff member to work from home as provided for under the UL Blended Working Policy and Procedure are supports which may be considered.</li></ul>	
<b>Occupational Health Supports:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ordinarily where an employee is seeking workplace accommodations for menopause symptoms, referral to occupational health is not required as the line manager is best placed to decide whether a particular work accommodation is feasible or not. Where menopausal symptoms are leading to repeated short-term absences, or an employee's fitness for work is impacted, referral to occupational health may be necessary in accordance with the Managing Attendance Procedure. This is to establish if all treatments are being fully utilised and to see if there are any additional accommodations not already identified that may be of benefit. In the case of long-term absence, referral to occupational health of any absence regardless of cause is required after 20 working days per the Managing Attendance Procedure.</li></ul>	

# Appendix 2



**Menopause – Workplace Support/Reasonable Accommodations Discussion Record Form**

AS IT RELATES TO A DISCUSSION BETWEEN AN EMPLOYEE AND THEIR LINE MANAGER, AND ANY PROPOSED SUPPORTIVE ARRANGMENTS DISCUSSED AND AGREED AT THIS MEETING

This is a living document and should be retained by the individual and their manager for as long as is necessary.

Please see the menopause procedure (appendix 1) for sample reasonable accommodations which may be considered (list is not exhaustive). It is important to remember that every individual will experience symptoms differently.

Once the supportive arrangements are agreed, they should be reviewed on a regular basis to evaluate the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place.

Agreed Supportive Arrangements	
Discussions took place with (Employee Name) _____ on (insert date) _____	
Employee Name	Line Manager Name
Employee Signature	Line Manager Signature

## 7 Document Control

<b>Document Version</b>	Version 2
<b>Document Owner</b>	Human Resources
<b>Consulted With:</b>	UL Unite
<b>Date</b>	22 January 2025
<b>Approved by</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Date</b>	20 February 2025
<b>Effective Date:</b>	20 February 2025
<b>Scheduled Review Date:</b>	20 February 2030