

Menopause Policy

October 2020



Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for a number of reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, gender transitioning, conditions needing hormone treatment, and menopause. These can bring about symptoms which could affect a colleague at work.

This policy focuses on menopause, and uses a few key terms:

Menopause: the point at which a woman's oestrogen levels decline, and she stops having periods. Menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years so it's best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

Perimenopause: this is the phase leading up to the menopause when a woman's hormone balance starts to change, and when she may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some women this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.

WHO is this policy for?

C4 aims to support all staff experiencing menopausal symptoms and help colleagues and line managers understand how they can support employees experiencing such symptoms.

WHY is this policy important?

The menopause is experienced by most women, usually between the ages of 45-55, though some women can experience it earlier than this, due to 'premature menopause' or surgery. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically; are different for everyone; and for a quarter of women they are severely debilitating. Symptoms can have a huge effect on a woman's comfort and performance when working. This policy is therefore imperative to ensure C4 provides an inclusive and supportive working environment in the office and whilst working from home for women experiencing the menopause.

Symptoms vary greatly, and commonly include (but aren't limited to):

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory loss
- depression
- headaches
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- reduced concentration
- heavy periods

Research suggests that, for 30% of women, the recent global pandemic has made the physiological and mental symptoms of menopause worse.

Source: Survey by The Menopause Hub, April 2020

This policy sets out the support available to women before, during and after the menopause. It is designed to ensure women suffering with

menopausal symptoms can feel empowered to ask for adjustments to ease such symptoms without embarrassment, can carry out their daily role in a safe working environment whether at home or in the office, and can have open discussions with colleagues and line managers so that they feel part of an inclusive work culture.

WHAT are the details of the policy?

Minor adjustments to an employee's working environment can make a huge difference.

If an employee is experiencing menopausal symptoms, the following options are available:

Desk Fans

When in the office, desk fans can be obtained from the Post Room on the Ground Floor in the London office, or for employees in Leeds, Bristol, Manchester and Glasgow offices, by contacting the local Workspace Coordinator or emailing the Workspace Helpdesk.

Quiet/Cool Room

It can be helpful to take time out to help manage symptoms when working at home, but when in the C4 London office, Wellbeing Room 3 in the basement offers a quiet, cool and private space should an employee need it, and can be used on a drop-in basis. There is also a First Aid room (Ground Floor) that can be used, and the keys can be collected from Lower Ground Floor helpdesk. For C4 offices in Leeds, Bristol, Manchester and Glasgow, employees can contact their local Workspace Coordinator or email the Workspace Helpdesk who will be able to assist.

Occupational Health

A working environment assessment can ensure that an employee's physical environment, whether at home or in the office, is not making their menopausal symptoms worse. Employees who are signed up to the Bupa private medical benefit can request one at any time by downloading the virtual health service app, Babylon. Details of how to access Babylon can be found on the C4 intranet, Moss.

Flexible Working

C4 recognises that flexibility is key to anyone suffering as a result of transitioning through the menopause and aims to facilitate flexible working wherever possible.

C4 have an established Flexible Working Policy which can be found on Moss that allows employees to make a permanent change to their contract. However, should an employee require a more temporary/flexible change, working arrangements could include:

- more breaks and time away from their computer
- flexibility to work in other areas of the building when in the office
- earlier start times and finish times to avoid peak travel times when travelling into the office
- a request to reduce working hours on a temporary basis
- turning their camera off when on Teams calls, and also having a walking meeting instead if helpful

These should be discussed and agreed with the employee's line manager and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure these adjustments continue to meet the needs of the employee.

Sickness/Paid Leave

An employee may feel unwell and unfit for work due to menopausal symptoms, and if so, C4 will support them. This includes the sudden onset of symptoms during the working day.

Details of our Sickness Absence Policy can be found on Moss. This entitles an employee to take paid leave for up to seven consecutive days without needing a fit note from their doctor.

Whilst an employee can simply inform their line manager they are unfit for work, they should also feel they can be open about the reason for their menopause-related leave with their line manager without fear of being discriminated against.

General Support

C4 aims to facilitate an open, understanding working environment and so we encourage

employees to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated, and the necessary support made available.

Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with:

- A trusted colleague
- 4Women (email its co-chairs: [redacted], or contact [redacted], [redacted] or [redacted] directly)
- HR's Menopause Champion, [redacted]
- Their HR Business Partner
- A Mental Health First Aider (the full list can be found on Moss)
- 4Mind, our mental health employee resource group (email their co-chairs: [redacted], or email [redacted] or [redacted] directly)

Medical support

We encourage employees to speak to their GP when they are experiencing symptoms.

Employees can also contact Channel 4's HR Menopause Champion, [redacted], if they are interested in speaking to a medical menopause specialist.

The virtual health service app, Babylon, offers access to a GP 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to those employees who are signed up to the Bupa private medical insurance benefit. Details of how to access Babylon can be found on Moss.

Bupa also offer [guidance on menopause](#).

Counselling Service

C4 also provides access to a confidential service via the Employee Assistance Programme, which can be found on Moss. The service offers support, expert advice and specialist counselling. It's free and easy to access and is available online or on the telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

There are also a number of support groups that can offer expert advice and the details can be found under the Health and Wellbeing section on Moss.

HOW do you now go about things?

The following identifies our responsibilities as employees, colleagues, line managers and C4.

Employees/Colleagues should:

- Educate themselves about the menopause and become familiar with the terms of this policy. Understand what information is available. Seek advice and guidance from available support provided at C4. Support colleagues.
- Be as open and honest as possible with line managers – reviewing and working through the available options together to ensure appropriate measures which support their working environment are in place.
- Agree to keep their line manager and C4 informed to ensure that the right support is being provided.
- If unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supportive, speak to one of the people mentioned in 'General Support' (above).

Line Managers should:

- Take part in future mandatory menopause awareness training.
- Ensure they are aware of the support C4 provides and the terms of this policy.
- Ensure all members of their team are aware of the policies and where to find information and seek support.
- Ensure they listen to the needs of each employee individually and are open and willing to have discussions around the menopause, ensuring confidentiality where requested by the employee.
- Work together with the employee to ensure that the right support is provided that satisfies both C4 and the employee's needs.
- Ensure regular check-ins are in place to review any support and make any necessary changes to an employee's working environment or patterns

that are required from both C4's/the employee's perspective. Regular check-ins are particularly important when working remotely.

C4 should:

- Ensure it reviews its health and wellbeing policies and practices on a regular basis.
- Ensure its health offerings (EAP, Private Medical Insurance, Babylon) have provisions to support employees experiencing the menopause.
- Listen and work with employees and employee rep groups to support and drive change in relation to the menopause.

WHERE can you get related information?

The following are links to some external sites that you may find useful. We are aware there is a lot of guidance available and everyone is different so please use this as a guide only and do let us know if there are any links that should be added to this list:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- The [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency;
- The [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause;
- [Henpicked](#), an online community that gives women a place to have their say, promote healthy debate and bring about positive change. They also provide 'lunch and learn' videos with industry wide experts that can be accessed [here](#);
- [MegsMenopause](#), an 'honest and frank' look at all things menopause.
- We also recommend this [practical guide for people managers](#) from the CIPD, which offers guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach the conversations about it appropriately and sensitively.

This policy was introduced by Channel 4's gender equality staff network, 4Women, in October 2019 and updated in October 2020, to ensure C4 provides the best support for women transitioning through the menopause. Please get in touch if you have any feedback or feel there are other ways C4 could provide support.

Please note: This policy does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and C4 may amend it at any time.

