

---

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY SUPPORTING STAFF THROUGH MENOPAUSE POLICY

---

## Introduction

1. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in the workplace. We are also committed to improving the wellbeing of members of staff and manage related issues effectively.
2. In this regard, CNPA will provide appropriate support to women who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers by providing guidance. It's important that the CNPA understands the difficulties and anxieties of women currently going through the menopause and that we manage this issue by raising awareness, and providing training and development for all line managers and colleagues.

## Scope and Purpose

3. This policy applies to all CNPA employees. The purpose of this policy and supporting guidance is to:
  - Create an environment where women feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work
  - Promote guidance which will provide direction and clarity on how to support women who raise menopause related issues, either for individuals experiencing this or those who are indirectly affected e.g. line managers, partners and colleagues.
  - Inform managers about the possible symptoms of menopause, what the consequences can be and what they can do to support women experiencing these symptoms at work.
  - Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

## Definitions

4. **Menopause** is a natural part of ageing that takes place when a woman stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. It is sometimes known as the 'change of life'. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen hormone levels decline. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51. However, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. The length of time menopause lasts can vary from only a few months to many years. The average is 4 years. As a result of these hormonal changes, many women experience both physical and emotional symptoms.
5. **Peri-menopause** is the transition stage before reaching menopause. Peri means 'around' and so is used to describe the time when a woman may start to experience

changes that lead to menopause, such as irregular periods or other symptoms. The peri-menopause stage can last for years before reaching menopause.

6. **Post-menopause** is the time following the last period, and is usually defined as more than 12 months with no periods (for a woman reaching menopause naturally), or immediately following surgery if the ovaries have been removed.

### **Symptoms of Menopause**

7. Whilst 70% of women experience some symptoms, and for some women they could be classed as severe, it is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom or need help and support.
8. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and can include:
  - Hot flushes
  - Sweats
  - Difficulty sleeping
  - Problems with memory and concentration
  - Headaches
  - Anxiety / panic attacks
  - Light/heavy periods
  - Fibroids which can cause haemorrhaging or “flooding”
  - Loss of confidence
  - Palpitations
  - Joint stiffness, aches and pains
  - Reduced muscle mass

The menopause can also increase the risk of developing certain other problems, such as weak bones (osteoporosis).

## **Responsibilities**

### **Organisation**

9. CNPA has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Through the CNPA Health and Safety Committee, CNPA will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these at regular intervals.

### **Line Managers**

10. Line managers must familiarise themselves with this policy and guidance, and the guidance in appendix 1, as well as CNPA’s policies on Equality and Diversity and Health and Wellbeing.
11. Line managers should also:

- a) Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
  - b) Some women are not comfortable discussing these issues with men, and in these circumstances, the line manager should sign post the employee to a female manager or HR if the employee requests this.
  - c) Use the guidance in Appendices I and Ia, signposting and reviewing with the member of staff before agreeing how best they can be supported and any adjustments required;
  - d) Record adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented;
  - e) Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates;
  - f) Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.
12. Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, a referral to Occupational Health may be considered.

### **Human Resources**

13. The HR team will develop organisation-wide policies and procedures to protect the health and wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of supporting employees to maintain good physical and psychological health.
14. A key priority for HR is to help create a working environment where CNPA staff are supported, to do this the HR team will:
- a) Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this policy and guidance
  - b) Be available to any member of staff who wishes to discuss menopause and who would prefer to discuss this with HR than with their line manager
  - c) Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and review as required.

### **Employees**

15. Staff must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing and informing the organisation if they believe their work or the work environment poses a risk to their health. If employees believe that their work, or some aspect of it, is putting their wellbeing at risk they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or the HR team.
16. Any health-related information disclosed by an employee during discussions with managers, the HR team or the occupational health service is treated in confidence.
17. Staff should be willing to help and support their colleagues.

### **Other Support for Menopause**

#### **Menopause Support Group**

18. Recognising that a significant proportion of CNPA staff are women who fall into the peri-menopause, menopause and post-menopause age range. An email support group has been set up, this is a self-driven group with no corporate intervention.

The purpose of the group is to provide peer support, to share information and seek guidance and advice. Any individual wishing to be part of this group should contact the HR team.

19. Other measures available to support members of staff include:
- a) Occupational health service.
  - b) Employee assistance programme.
  - c) Opportunities for flexible working.
  - d) Free sanitary products available in all female and gender neutral toilets.
  - e) Wall of wellbeing.

## **Related Policies**

21. This employee health and wellbeing policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant CNPA policies and procedures, including:
- Absence management.
  - Dignity at work.
  - Equal opportunities.
  - Flexitime.
  - Health & wellbeing.
  - Leave.
  - Stress.
  - Work/life balance.

## **Further Sources of Information/Support**

22. All employees can access counselling through the CNPA's Employee Assistance Programme by calling **0800 587 5670**. All calls are free, confidential and available 24 hours, 7 days a week throughout the year. Further information can be found at: [www.sg.helpeap.com](http://www.sg.helpeap.com)
23. NHS: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/)
24. Menopause Matters: [www.menopuasematters.co.uk](http://www.menopuasematters.co.uk)
25. Women's Health Concern (patient arm for the British Menopause Society): [www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause](http://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause)

## **Laws Relating to this Document**

26. *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*

## **Monitoring and Review**

27. This policy shall be reviewed every two years or exceptionally upon request.

28. This policy is intended to provide guidance but is not contractual and does not form a part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment.

<b>Policy Owner:</b>	HR	<b>Approved By:</b>	SCF
<b>Date</b>	25 March 2019	<b>Review in:</b>	2 years
<b>Approved:</b>			

### Managers' Guidance for colleague discussions

We recognise that every woman is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) – provide the Menopause Advice Factsheet if appropriate - [www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/](http://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/)
- Agree actions, and how to implement them (you should use the template at Appendix Ia to record the meeting), so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is stored securely in the Corporate Services/Corporate Management/Appraisals folder.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.

### 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 on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Have access to a rest room 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 access to toilet facilities. In these circumstances, some women prefer to use female only toilets (which are located in the corridor linking the new extension with the old, and at the top floor of #16). These toilets should have suitable waste disposal facilities as well as washing cleaning facilities.

- Access to sanitary products in all female and gender neutral toilets

### **Headaches**

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

### **Exhaustion and Difficulty Sleeping**

- Suggest they make full use of flexible working, particularly when suffering from a lack of sleep. Flexible working in these circumstances may include later starting times, or a request for a temporary reduction in hours

### **Low Mood**

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head';

### **Loss of Confidence**

- Ensure there are regular personal development discussions;
- Have time with their manager to discuss any issues;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work following discussions.

### **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;
- Offer quiet space to work;
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

### **Anxiety**

- 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;
- 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.

Remember, where appropriate in your discussions, you can provide the employee with the Freephone number for counselling support through the CNPA's Employee Assistance Provider, **0800 587 5670** ([www.sg.helpcap.com](http://www.sg.helpcap.com))

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to discuss an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

For any further advice or guidance, please speak to the HR team.



**Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template**

<b>Employee's Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
<b>Job Title:</b>	
<b>Directorate</b>	

<b>Line Managers Name:</b>	
<b>Date of discussion:</b>	

**Summary of Discussion:**

**Agreed Actions/Adjustments:**

Date of next review meeting .....

Signed (Member of staff) .....

Signed (Line Manager) .....