

Tiny Toes acknowledges that transitioning through the menopause can be a difficult and stressful time and employees can experience symptoms that can impact their work life and we are committed to supporting our staff in practical and reasonable ways. This policy sets out the support that the Nursery will provide when an employee is affected by the menopause or is experiencing menopause-related symptoms.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Make line managers aware of their responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues and how they can affect employees and their work colleagues
- Educate line managers about potential symptoms of the menopause and how they can support employees in the workplace
- Raise wider awareness and understanding among employees
- Encourage employees to talk about the menopause openly and confidently
- Outline the support and reasonable adjustments that are available to employees
- Reduce menopause-related sickness absence by supporting staff to remain in work.

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for all women, although it can also be brought on as a result of other medical conditions or certain surgical interventions. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months, but it is best described as a “transition” rather than as a one-off event. After a woman has not had a period for a year, the time from that point is then considered to be the post-menopause, but this does not mean menopause symptoms cease. Menopause symptoms continue, on average, for four years from the last period and can continue for up to twelve years.

The perimenopause is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause and it can often last four to five years, although for some women it may continue for many more years or for others it may last only for a few months. During the time of the perimenopause, individuals may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels. These symptoms may vary in degree between different individuals. As individuals may still be having regular periods at the onset of these symptoms, many do not always realise that they are experiencing the perimenopause and may not understand what is causing their symptoms. This can be a barrier to accessing support.

It is important to recognise that, for many reasons, the menopause affects women’s physical and psychological health differently. Symptoms vary in type, amount, severity and length between individuals. The symptoms of the menopause can include:

- Hot flushes and daytime sweats
- Palpitations and night sweats
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbances and insomnia
- Headaches
- Skin irritation
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Irritability and mood disturbances
- Poor concentration levels
- Forgetfulness and memory loss

- Anxiety, depression, panic attacks
- Weight gain
- Loss of confidence
- Changes in menstrual flow and regularity, including heavy bleeding
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs), including cystitis
- The need for more regular and/or urgent toilet breaks.

These symptoms can adversely affect how employees work, their relationships with work colleagues and their performance and productivity levels.

Communication

The Nursery will seek to promote a greater openness about, and understanding of, the menopause among line managers and staff and will encourage line managers to create a supportive and understanding team culture that removes any barriers to employees disclosing information to them.

Workplace adjustments

The Nursery is committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate support and adjustments are put in place. These may include:

- Adjusting workplace temperatures, improving ventilation, providing fans
- Allowing temporary changes to work/shift patterns
- Reviewing workload/duties
- Making sure employees can take regular and flexible toilet breaks
- Permitting time off for attendance at medical appointments
- Being flexible when applying the performance management, attendance or disciplinary procedures

The Nursery will carry out risk assessments which take the specific needs of menopausal employees into consideration.