

# Menopause Policy

May 2023

**BIG**  
little  
**LDN™**

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, but is inclusive of Perimenopause and Premature menopause.

**Menopause:** the point at which a woman's oestrogen levels decline, and she stops having periods. The menopause marks the end of a woman's reproductive years (which also means the end of their monthly periods) and is medically defined as 12 consecutive months without menstruating. All women, some trans and some non-binary people will go through the menopause. Although trans women do not go through the menopause they may also experience similar symptoms to perimenopause as a result of withdrawing from hormones.

**Perimenopause:** the phase leading up to the menopause when the female body makes its natural transition to menopause – literally the pause of menstruation – also sometimes referred to as 'menopausal transition'. During this phase the levels of hormones oestrogen, progesterone & testosterone change & decline giving rise to any number of 48 possible physical & psychological symptoms. Not every woman will experience every symptom, and some don't experience any at all! There is no one-size-fits-all and everyone's experience is individual. Perimenopause is a transitional phase that can last anywhere between 4 - 12 years with most women starting to notice signs such as more irregular periods in their forties.

**Premature menopause:** also known as 'early' menopause, is a natural but quite rare (1%) phenomenon when a woman experiences her menopause much earlier than average. This can be extremely distressing and even more 'othering' in a work environment for those who experience it. Early menopause or surgical menopause can also be a by-product of other procedures such as fibroids, hysterectomy and cancer.

## Who is this policy for?

BIG little LDN 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 BIG little LDN provides an inclusive and supportive working environment in the office and whilst working from home for women experiencing the menopause.

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 or their menopause-related leave with their line manager without fear of being discriminated against.

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, 90% of women experience hot flushes, 56% panic attacks/ anxiety, 80% brain fog/memory loss, 72% broken sleep, 66% depression and sadness, 18% suicidal thoughts, 40% migraines, 65% fatigue and 22% dizziness.

Source: Survey by Bloom, July 2022

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, handheld or neck fans can be requested from your line manager by email.

### Quiet/Cool Room

It can be helpful to take time out to help manage symptoms when working at home, but when in the BIG little LDN WeWork Monument office, there is a wellbeing room on the ground floor which offers a quiet, cool and private space should an employee need it. It can be accessed by informing a member of the WeWork Community team.

Employees can also make use of the roof terrace on Floor 9 which has comfortable sofas.

Employees are also welcome to leave the office for fresh air at short notice. We ask that anyone needing time out, informs their line manager or colleague so suitable cover can be arranged if necessary.

### Flexible Working

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



## Flexible Working (Cont.)

BIG little LDN have an established Flexible Working Policy which can be found on SharePoint 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, BIG little LDN will support them. This includes the sudden onset of symptoms during the working day. Details of our Sickness Absence Policy can be found on SharePoint. This entitles an employee to self-certify any absence of less than 7 consecutive days without needing a fit note from their doctor. We may ask you to fill in a form to do this. 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

BIG little LDN 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
- Our HR Consultant Amanda Henderson at Thread HR.
- A Mental Health First Aider (the full list can be found on SharePoint)

## Medical support

We encourage employees to speak to their GP when they are experiencing symptoms. If your GP makes any recommendations for your working environment, we welcome this to be shared with your line manager so we can ensure we are supporting you.

## Counselling Service

BIG little LDN also offers employees who have completed their probationary period, six free, opt-out only, confidential mental health sessions with a trained mental health professional. If you have already used your six free sessions, please speak to your line manager as further support may be able to be offered.

There are also a number of support groups that can offer expert advice including:

- **NHS:** Menopause: [nhs.uk/conditions/menopause](https://nhs.uk/conditions/menopause)
- **NHS:** Early menopause: [nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause](https://nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause)
- **Acas:** Menopause at work: [acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work](https://acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work)
- **CIPD:** Let's talk menopause: [cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause](https://cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause)
- **The Daisy Network:** [daisynetwork.org](https://daisynetwork.org)
- **British Menopause Society:** [thebms.org.uk](https://thebms.org.uk)
- **Menopause Exchange:** [menopause-exchange.co.uk](https://menopause-exchange.co.uk)
- **Henpicked's menopause hub:** [henpicked.net/menopause-hub](https://henpicked.net/menopause-hub)
- **Talking Menopause:** [talkingmenopause.co.uk](https://talkingmenopause.co.uk)
- **Menopause Matters:** [menopausematters.co.uk](https://menopausematters.co.uk)
- **My menopause centre:** [mymenopausecentre.com](https://mymenopausecentre.com)
- **Gen M:** [gen-m.com](https://gen-m.com)
- **Bloom:** <https://www.bloomnetwork.uk/menofesto>

## How do you now go about things?

The following identifies our responsibilities as employees, colleagues, line managers and BIG little LDN.

### 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 BIG little LDN.
- 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 BIG little LDN 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 BIG little LDN 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 BIG little LDN 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 BIG little LDN's/the employee's perspective. Regular check-ins are particularly important when working remotely.

### BIG little LDN should:

- Ensure it reviews its health and wellbeing policies and practices on a regular basis.
- Ensure its health offerings (Opt-out mental health sessions) have provisions to support employees experiencing the menopause.
- Listen and work with employees 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 BIG little LDN's Founding team in May 2023 to ensure BIG little LDN 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 BIG little LDN could provide support.

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

# **BIGGER TOGETHER**

The logo is a yellow circle containing the text "BIG little LDN" in a dark blue, sans-serif font. "BIG" is in all caps and bold, "little" is in lowercase and regular weight, and "LDN" is in all caps and bold, with a small trademark symbol (TM) to its upper right.

**BIG**  
little  
**LDN**<sup>TM</sup>