

Menstrual Health

WORKPLACE POLICY

STOP THE STIGMA

This policy aims to provide information and guidance to managers and employees to ensure that the workplace is conducive to managing periods in a professional and effective manner.

Introduction

We at _____ recognise the importance of providing a supportive and inclusive work environment for all employees, including those who experience periods. This policy aims to create a workplace culture that acknowledges and supports the unique challenges and needs that may arise dealing with menstrual health.

The purpose of this policy is to create an inclusive working environment for all employees of the organisation, by providing support for those who are experiencing difficult periods, which can have a negative impact on their personal and working life. The policy also recognises that one's menstrual health is an individual experience and that people can be affected in different ways and to differing degrees, and therefore, different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. The ultimate goal is to improve employees' wellbeing at work by creating an environment in which employees can openly and honestly initiate or engage in discussions about periods whether they themselves or someone they are supporting is experiencing symptoms.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the organisation, regardless of gender, age, or any other characteristic. All employees have the right to be informed and supported in managing their periods at work.

The objectives of this policy are to:

1. Increase awareness of the impact of periods on employees' wellbeing.
2. Provide guidance to managers on how to support employees who experience difficult periods.
3. Provide guidance to employees on how to manage their periods at work.
4. Create a supportive and inclusive workplace that recognises the needs of employees who experience difficult periods.
5. Reduce stigma, discrimination, and embarrassment related to periods at work.

Symptoms of menstruation

heavy bleeding ● abdominal cramping ● some medical conditions cause severe or debilitating pain ● severe nausea ● migraines ● mood swings ● feeling depressed ● irritability ● tiredness ● bloating ● breast tenderness ● acne

It is important to note the above is not an exhaustive list of symptoms, and menstrual health related conditions can present themselves in various forms depending on the person. The symptoms listed can also vary greatly among individuals, and not all people will experience all of them. Some individuals may experience medical conditions that have severe painful menstrual symptoms such as endometriosis, PCOS, or adenomyosis, and these conditions may require medical attention. This policy encourages employees to seek medical advice and support if necessary.

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Policy guidelines

Education and training: The organisation will provide information and training to managers and employees on periods, painful period related conditions and period stigma. The training should include information on the impact of periods on employees, the symptoms and effects, and how to better manage them at work.

Support for employees: The organisation will support employees who experience periods. This can include flexible working arrangements where suitable, access to rest facilities, and access to appropriate sanitary products. Managers should be aware of and sensitive to the needs of employees and provide suitable support where necessary. The organisation will also make reasonable accommodation to assist employees who experience severe or difficult periods based on need.

Confidentiality: The organisation will maintain the confidentiality of any employees' disclosed menstrual health. Employees should be able to discuss their needs and symptoms with their managers in a confidential manner.

Anti-discrimination: The organisation will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or bullying related to periods or for anyone accessing these supports. Any employee found to be engaging in such behaviour will be subject to disciplinary action.

Review and evaluation: The organisation will regularly review and evaluate this policy to ensure that it remains relevant and effective in meeting the needs of employees who experience menstruation.

Action points for managing staff

Managers can take a number of steps to make the workplace more supportive and help employees manage difficult period symptoms more comfortably in work. Here are some guidelines.

1. **Create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture:** this can involve promoting an open and positive attitude towards periods, encouraging communication and understanding, and challenging any stigma or negative attitudes.
2. **Be proactive in initiating discussions with employees:** managers can take the lead in initiating conversations with employees about any issues or concerns they may have related to periods. They can also offer support and advice on any available resources and benefits.
3. **Be understanding and flexible:** managers should be understanding and flexible towards employees experiencing symptoms of periods, such as allowing for more frequent breaks, adjustments to working hours or conditions, and providing access to supportive resources. During performance assessments, managers should take into account any disadvantage suffered by employees experiencing painful period related medical conditions which may have affected their work.
4. **Provide access to relevant resources and support:** managers should be knowledgeable about the available resources and support for employees managing their menstrual health. This can include access to healthcare professionals, employee assistance programs, or other relevant support services.
5. **Maintain confidentiality and privacy:** managers should respect the privacy of employees who have disclosed issues with their menstrual health and ensure that any personal information is kept confidential and not shared with others without the employee's consent.

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Action points for employees

There are several things that employees can do to proactively improve their period experiences in the workplace.

1. **Advocate for yourself:** If you're not getting the support you need, don't be afraid to speak up and advocate for yourself. This could mean requesting specific accommodations or talking to your HR department about what support is available.
2. **Take breaks when needed:** Always ensure you take your allocated breaks, and if you're experiencing discomfort or other symptoms related to your period take extra breaks when needed.
3. **Connect with others:** Consider connecting with other colleagues or contacting a union representative. This can help you feel less isolated and provide you with a support system to help you manage your symptoms and request suitable working arrangements.
4. **Communicate with your manager:** It's important to have an open and honest conversation with your manager about your needs and how they can support you during your periods. Let them know what accommodations you may need, such as flexible work hours or a more comfortable work environment.

Workplace supports to be provided

1. **Flexible scheduling**
Where possible, the organisation will provide flexible working for employees who experience period related symptoms. This includes the option to work from home or to adjust work hours as needed to accommodate physical discomfort, fatigue, or other symptoms.
2. **Protected Leave**
10 days' paid leave will be ringfenced for employees who require time off due to severe symptoms related to menstrual medical conditions.
3. **Improved training for line managers and supervisors**
Greater understanding would alleviate the barriers people often face in raising, and in many cases, explaining in detail what they are going through to their supervisors, while also providing guidance and a framework on how the supervising staff can best help and accommodate the employee.
4. **Access to free menstrual products**
The organisation will ensure that menstrual products (such as sanitary products) are available in all restrooms and that these products are free of charge. Employees should also have the option to request additional products, such as specific types of menstrual products.
5. **Accommodations for physical needs**
The organisation will make reasonable accommodations to support employees who experience physical discomfort from symptoms related to periods, including environmental supports such as office temperature, desk fans, breathable uniform fabrics, access to wash facilities, toilet facilities, and cold drinking water.
6. **Supportive culture**
The organisation will work to create a culture that supports employees who experience periods and menopause. This includes providing education and training to all employees on the biological processes, as well as fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their needs and seeking support from their colleagues and supervisors.
7. **Confidentiality and privacy**
The organisation recognises that periods and menopause are personal and private experiences and will ensure that all employees' privacy and confidentiality are respected. Any information about an employee's menstrual cycle or menopause-related symptoms will be kept confidential and not disclosed to anyone without the employee's explicit consent.

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Conclusion

The organisation is committed to providing a work environment that is conducive to managing periods in a professional and effective manner. Managers and employees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with this policy and to seek guidance or support as necessary.

It is the responsibility of good employers to ensure that as part of a wider occupational health awareness initiative issues such as menstruation are highlighted so all staff know that their employer has a positive attitude to the issue. Menstruation should not be something that women feel embarrassed about and cannot raise in the workplace. Having a workplace policy in place that also includes guidance for managers is important for both workers and employers.