

## Menopause in the Workplace

Many women will experience severe menopausal symptoms that can have a significant impact on their day-to-day life. The working environment can often be the place in which women find the most difficult to manage their symptoms. Whilst this can be difficult enough, many also feel reluctant or hesitant to speak to their workplace about their menopausal status. The British Menopause Society found that 45% of women felt that menopausal symptoms had a negative impact on their work and 47% who needed to take a day off work due to menopause symptoms say they wouldn't tell their employer the real reason.

It's therefore important to raise awareness about the menopause and understand what employers can do to support employees experiencing the menopause. This isn't only important for those going through the menopause, but for all staff, particularly line managers and HR teams, who have some responsibility over the health and wellbeing of their employees. Ensuring there is support available in the workplace helps those experiencing menopausal symptoms to feel they can be more open, without being stigmatised. Creating a workplace culture that is open and accepting towards the menopause may help overcome their taboo, facilitate all staff to engage with the issue and support one another when at work. This may also help to positively influence the experience of the menopause and its symptoms in staff.

### Signs and Symptoms to look out for as an employer:

- Poor concentration
- Tiredness
- Poor memory
- Feeling low/depressed
- Lowered confidence
- Forgetfulness

### How to help and support employees through the menopause:

- **Educate Yourself:** Understanding the menopause and its effects on women is crucial for providing meaningful support. The menopause is triggered by hormonal changes that can result in symptoms such as (but not limited to) hot flashes, mood swings, night sweats, and decreased energy levels. By educating yourself about these changes, you can empathize better with your loved one's experiences.
- **Active Listening:** Menopause can be an emotionally challenging time. Be attentive and actively listen to their feelings, concerns, and frustrations. Sometimes, all a person needs is a compassionate ear to vent their feelings.
- **Encourage Open Communication:** Create a safe and non-judgmental environment for employees to share their experiences openly. Assure them that you are there to support them through this phase of life, regardless of the challenges it may bring.
- **Be Patient:** Menopause can bring about unpredictable mood swings and irritability due to hormonal fluctuations. Understand that these emotions are a natural part of the process, and it's essential to be patient and understanding during this time.

## Legislation

It's important for employers to understand how the menopause relates to the law to ensure they have steps, procedures and support in place to help staff affected by the menopause.

**Equality Act (2010)** - Menopause is not a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010 (the Act), but sex, age and disability are all characteristics which provide protection against unfair treatment of employees going through the menopause.

**Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** – provides for safe working, which extends to the working conditions when experiencing menopausal symptoms.

## Reasonable Adjustments

The workplace could consider reasonable adjustments to help menopausal individuals to manage their symptoms whilst they are working. Reasonable adjustments should help to change or reduce the effects menopause has on the employee's ability to do their job. Some examples could be:

- Flexible working, such as changing working patterns/schedules or working from home
- Requesting a different uniform if you are experiencing hot flushes
- More time to prepare for meetings/appointments if necessary
- Moving closer to a window in the office, or asking for a fan
- Using technology where it can help – e.g. setting alarms or reminders on phones, or using it to take notes instead of written notes.
- Recording sickness absence for menopausal related symptoms separately from other sickness absence.

Supporting someone through the menopause journey is a compassionate act that requires patience, understanding, and empathy. By educating ourselves about the menopause and its effects, we can create a supportive environment that enables them to navigate this phase with greater ease. Remember, offering a listening ear and a caring heart can make all the difference during this transformative time of life.

## More information

If you would like to view the Webinar on 'Menopause in the Workplace' this is being delivered live on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November at 12pm with our Menopause Expert, please use the following link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8800261699918555482>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

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