

Menopause in the workplace

A manager's
guide



The menopause can be hard work. So, at work, let's make it easier.

**Easier to recognise.
Easier to talk about.
Easier to live with.**



Easier to recognise

- Typically, people begin to experience menopausal symptoms in their mid to late 40s. This is known as the perimenopause. Anything after the 'official' menopause (12 months of no period) is known as postmenopause. Early menopause is usually when a person begins the transition in their early 40s or younger. In some cases, this is referred to as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI), which can be caused by certain underlying conditions and/or treatments for diseases.
- Menopause symptoms can, and will, come when they want. They don't care about deadlines or targets. The menopause doesn't keep office hours or take annual leave. In the workplace, people with menopausal symptoms can often feel very isolated.
- Research led by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) found that people going through the menopause often don't talk about symptoms that are affecting their work because they're embarrassed, or feel that their employer will be embarrassed.
- Fostering a culture of openness and understanding in the workplace will not only have a positive impact on people going through the menopause, but will demonstrate to all employees that issues of physical and mental wellbeing are a top priority.

64%*

of female employees believe that having to manage their menopause symptoms at work makes their lives more difficult in the workplace.

Easier to talk about

Before approaching a one-to-one conversation, you could have a general team meeting to discuss health and wellbeing at work. This is a great way to introduce topics you or your team might find difficult to talk about.

- When discussing the menopause, be explicit:
"Today we are talking about the menopause, to help understand the symptoms, how they affect us at work and what we can do to try and make it easier."
- Try to initiate conversation topics and open lines of communication:
"If you want to speak to me more about anything we've talked about today, my door is always open."

By doing this you're showing employees that you're committing to help, as an employer. And that you're being mindful of how you broach the subject:

- When people share their experiences of the symptoms of menopause, it's important to always be respectful of their experiences
- Talking about the menopause in the workplace should not just be welcomed, but encouraged
- Better understanding will not only help those going through it right now but also alleviate some of the fear for those yet to reach it

For additional advice and resources head to the [Menopause Hub](#).



Remember

No-one wants to hear that the menopause is a 'woman's problem' or an 'age thing'. Non-binary and transgender employees may find the menopause and its symptoms particularly difficult to talk about and go through.

People don't 'have' the menopause, they experience the symptoms of the menopause. The menopause can also put strain on relationships outside of work, so be mindful of this. Don't 'blame' things on the menopause.

One size doesn't fit all

Everyone that goes through the menopause will all have an entirely unique experience. The age they start the transition, the scope and severity of symptoms and the openness with which they want to communicate it, will all vary vastly.

Care by association

Menopause charities and organisations in the UK can offer literature packs, training and charters for workplaces that want to support both employers and employees. The Menopause Workplace Pledge, for example, has been signed by companies such as the BBC, NHS England, Royal Mail and House of Commons and commits to:

- Recognising that the menopause can be an issue in the workplace and people need support
- Talking openly, positively and respectfully about the menopause
- Actively supporting and informing your employees affected by the menopause

A healthy investment

Beyond the improvements you can make in the workplace, investing in private healthcare for your employees gives them access to further benefits and services. At any given time, around 13 million people in the UK are experiencing menopause, and the symptoms can be disruptive for those who work.

That's why it's important to provide extra support for those employees where you can.

As a Benenden Health member, employees can access support services for when they are going through the menopause, including:

- 24/7 Mental Health Helpline
- 24/7 GP Helpline
- Physiotherapy
- Menopause Hub of content within the Benenden Health App exclusive to members. Including, informative courses, live events and videos to support employees through every stage of the menopause



Easier to live with

Practical pointers for the workplace, to support women with menopausal symptoms...

- Champion menopause charities and organisations in newsletters and on social media
- Appoint a wellbeing officer (if you don't already have one) that can be a point of contact for people
- Look for external specialists and speakers that can come in and hold sessions on the Menopause
- If people are experiencing symptoms such as hot flushes can their work station be moved closer to a window or an air-conditioning vent, or can you provide fans to help keep them cool and feel more comfortable?



- You could designate quiet areas where people can take time out if they need to collect their thoughts privately or enjoy a peaceful break away from their work station
- Extend your drinks offering to include non-caffeinated options and herbal teas such as black cohosh root, ginseng and red raspberry leaf
- People going through the menopause may require more frequent toilet breaks - ensure this is understood and accepted
- Provide a selection of free sanitary products, plus an area where people can freshen up on breaks and perhaps even change their clothes
- If your employees wear uniforms, ask if they're happy with the fit – they may prefer a looser size
- Could you supply some extra garments to change into throughout the day?
- Is the fabric non-breathable – could you provide alternative options that are still in-keeping with the business branding?

These suggestions will make a big difference at a relatively small cost and you could use these changes as an opportunity to start conversations with your employees. Show them you care and ask them for feedback.

Feel free to get in touch with any questions:



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* Please note that your call may be recorded for our mutual security and also for training and quality purposes. Lines are open 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays). Please see our website for the most up to date opening times.

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