

Menopause at work – Let's get the conversation started



Did you know that menopausal people are the fastest growing population at work? Or that almost 8 out of 10 menopausal people are in work?

Whilst some people sail through menopause, 3 out of 4 experience symptoms and as many as 1 in 4 have serious symptoms. However, around half have never consulted a healthcare professional about their menopause.

Research also shows that the majority are unwilling to discuss menopause related health problems with their line managers, or ask for any support they may need.

Possible symptoms

Everyone experiences menopause differently. Menopausal symptoms can pose major and embarrassing problems for some people, leaving them feeling less confident and at odds with their desired professional image. The main problems at work are attributed to the following symptoms:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Anxiety
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Memory loss
- Depression
- Headaches
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced concentration
- Heavy periods

Why is it important to talk about menopause at work?

Menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45-55. In the UK the average age is 51. Almost two thirds of pharmacists are women, a third of whom are over the age of 45.

Studies have shown that race and ethnicity may affect the onset of menopausal symptoms, with black women experiencing symptoms on average 8.5 years earlier than white women.

Trans and non-binary colleagues may also experience menopausal symptoms and this is often overlooked. When fostering an open environment to discuss these issues, it is important to be mindful to include people who may not fit preconceived thoughts of who may need adjustments in the workplace.

Some people are reluctant to talk about menopause-related health problems with their line managers, or to ask for support. This can result in an increase in sickness absence and in some cases can lead to women leaving their jobs.

Fostering a culture of awareness, openness and inclusivity will help people feel supported during this normal life stage.

Available support

Colleagues should be encouraged to talk about their symptoms and how these might be affecting their work and to ask for support if needed.

Regular, informal conversation between colleagues and line managers about their symptoms and the effect these are having in the workplace can identify practical changes which can help to alleviate their impact. The changes don't need to be costly or complicated. It is important, however, that people feel empowered to speak openly about their health issues and to ask for help. Employers can help by communicating to their workforce that health-related problems such as the menopause are 'normal'.

Whilst not exhaustive, possible improvements at work may include:

- Greater awareness about the menopause as a possible occupational health issue
- Increased flexibility of working hours and working arrangements
- Better access to informal and formal sources of support
- Improvements in workplace temperature and ventilation

Further support can be found in the Business in Community's [Sleep and Recovery Toolkit](#). Your employer may also provide an employee assistance programme (EAP).