

It's OK ... NOT TO BE OKAY ...

Let's Talk about ... Menopause at work

Managing the effects of the menopause at work is important for employers and employees.

Menopause can have a huge impact on your life, including relationships and work.

For those experiencing symptoms it can be a difficult and stressful time. Everyone will experience the menopause differently and for some, symptoms can be quite severe and can affect people both physically and mentally.

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle. This can include:

- trans people – 'trans' is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
- people with 'variations of sex development' (VSD) – some people might prefer to identify as intersex or use the term 'differences in sex development' (DSD)

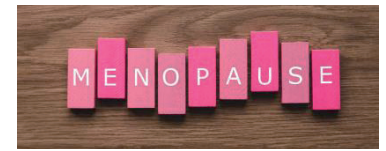
It is important for employers to be aware of all of the people who might go through the menopause and menopause symptoms and to support them all equally.

The menopause usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age but it can also happen earlier or later in someone's life. For many people symptoms last about 4 years, but in some cases symptoms can last a lot longer. Symptoms typically include:

Mental health symptoms- changes to mood, low mood, anxiety, mood swings, low self-esteem, problems with memory, or concentration (brain fog)

Physical symptoms include:

- hot flushes, when you have sudden feelings of hot or cold in your face, neck and chest which can make you dizzy
- difficulty sleeping, which may be a result of night sweats and make you feel tired and irritable during the day
- palpitations, when your heartbeats suddenly become more noticeable
- headaches and migraines that are worse than usual
- muscle aches and joint pains
- changed body shape and weight gain
- skin changes including dry and itchy skin
- reduced sex drive
- vaginal dryness and pain, itching or discomfort during sex
- recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)



There are 3 different stages to the menopause:

- Perimenopause (around menopause- the time taken for the whole process).
- Menopause (the actual process).
- Post menopause (the term to describe when someone has gone through the menopause).

Some people might also experience early menopause or go through medical menopause earlier in their lives. These types of menopause can be medically complicated, so employers should consider this when supporting their staff.

All stages and types of the menopause are different and symptoms can vary from person to person, and range from very mild to severe. It is important that the menopause need to be handled sensitively and confidentially.

What can we do?

It is important for employers to be aware that the menopause and its symptoms can affect staff at any time. Being aware of this can help staff continue to do their job confidently and effectively. The menopause can also have an impact on those supporting someone going through the menopause, for example a relative, partner, colleague or carer.

Although the menopause will only be experienced by women and other people who have a menstrual cycle, men should also be included in conversations and training. This is because they might be supporting others going through it.

Supporting and creating a positive and open environment between an employer and someone affected by the menopause can help prevent the person from:

- losing confidence in their skills and abilities
- feeling like they need to take time off work and hide the reasons for it
- having increased mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression
- leaving their job

If someone is discriminated against at work

If an employee or worker is put at a disadvantage or treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be discriminatory if connected to a protected characteristic.

References and further support can be found at:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/menopause-and-the-law>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/help-and-support/>

<https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>

<https://www.balance-menopause.com/>



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