How do we support menopause at work?

Your role as a line manager in supporting women experiencing menopause symptoms is crucial. Offering support to colleagues with menopausal symptoms that are impacting on their work will help you to improve your team’s morale, retain valuable skills and talent, and reduce sickness absence.

In this guide we will cover:

- The four compelling reasons why employers should be supporting menopause in the workplace:
  - Demographic case
  - Business case
  - Legal case
  - Social responsibility case

- Key menopause facts all line managers should be aware of

- Managing menopause - signposting our 3-stage process

- How to have a supportive conversation

- Useful resources
Four compelling reasons

The demographic case
Many women in mid and later life are returning to work or staying in work longer. In fact, women aged 50-64 have been the fastest-growing demographic in the workplace in the UK for decades. Looking at January-March 2020 compared with the same time period in 1993, their labour market participation had increased by 21.2 percentage points. This is compared with a rise of 12.2 percentage points for men in the same time period. So this is a big demographic at work.

The business case
There are many associated costs if a woman leaves her job due to debilitating symptoms. Assuming she’s earning £25k - which is lower than the UK average - her departure will cost her organisation over £30,500. As well as recruitment costs, organisations are also losing a colleague with knowledge and experience, which will take time for her replacement to get up to speed with.
4 compelling reasons

The legal case
The most relevant legislation covering menopause is the Equality Act 2010, which has been the basis of three successful tribunals. The protected characteristics relevant to menopause are age, sex and disability. We have also had health and safety at work legislation since 1974. This puts a duty of care on employers, and failing to look after menopausal women could be argued as breach of this law. Another good reason to follow best practice in how you support menopausal women in the workplace.

The social responsibility case
Because it’s the right thing to do. Statistics from ITV and the Wellbeing of Women tell us that 25% of women surveyed said they’d considered quitting work, and half said work made their symptoms worse. That’s an awful lot of women going through a miserable time. There is strong evidence that work is a great provider of social support and a source of self esteem. Normalising menopause at work and making it unremarkable is the right thing to do. A key comparator is women who are pregnant or have children, which is an ordinary workplace conversation. There is growing evidence that normalising menopause in conversation pays dividends. Women who feel supported are happier and more committed and satisfied. This is hard to tangibly measure, but is in evidence in a lot of data.
Menopausal women are the fastest-growing workforce demographic in the UK
Menopause: the facts

More than 3 out of 4 women experience menopause symptoms at some time.

But menopause isn’t something just women need to know about - men should be aware too, so they can support colleagues, friends and family.

Did you know?

51 is the average age women reach menopause

1 in 4 women experience serious symptoms

2 in 5 women said their menopause symptoms had been worse than they had expected

8 in 10 women of menopausal age are in work

1 in 100 women reach menopause before the age of 40

The majority of women are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to their line managers.
Managing Your Menopause 3-Stage Process

Managing Your Menopause (3-stage process) helps women understand how they can manage their menopause. Everyone's experience of menopause is different. Women experience different symptoms, have different views or philosophies around how they'd prefer to manage them and different medical histories too. This workbook is to help a woman work out what's right for her, and plan her next steps. As a line manager, this can be a useful tool to signpost:
How to have a supportive conversation about menopause

Research tells us that some women can find it hard to talk to their manager about how menopause is affecting them. However, your role as manager is to help your team be their best at work. Preparation will help you both. This will result in a much better conversation and outcome for both you and your colleague.

**Prepare for your meeting.** Check out what support is available in your organisation. Search your organisation’s intranet or if there’s nothing there, talk to HR.

**Book a meeting.** Arrange a time to meet, allowing enough time for the conversation. Think about where you are meeting, finding a room which will allow the conversation to be confidential.

**Encourage them to speak openly and honestly.** Understand how menopause is affecting them at work, what they’re doing to manage their menopause and what you as their line manager could do to help. Discuss what the support they would like e.g. reasonable adjustments and timescales. Or sometimes just knowing someone understands and is there to listen can help.

Agree with your colleague what you can both do. If you need to, take time to find out information and seek advice.

**Do they want the conversation to be confidential?** Some of us are happy talking about menopause openly, others are not. Talk to your colleague about whether you want the conversation to be kept confidential or if they’re happy to discuss it with colleagues. It’s their choice.

**Follow up.** At the end of the meeting put a time in the diary to meet again, whether that’s to agree a way forward, to monitor progress or update. Menopause symptoms can change over time.

Above all, it’s in both your best interests to find a good solution. All anyone wants is for your team to be fit and well to enable them to do their job to the best of their ability.
# Do's and Don'ts

## Line Managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you should do</th>
<th>What you shouldn't do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Know your facts</td>
<td>• Make assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talk about menopause</td>
<td>• Shy away from talking about menopause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Follow your process</td>
<td>• Share personal information without consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep an open mind and be flexible</td>
<td>• Address performance without checking health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide support and focus on the solution</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refer to HR and OH, if needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**DON'T GIVE MEDICAL ADVICE BUT DO SUGGEST RELEVANT SUPPORT**
Useful resources

General menopause information:
- Nice Guidelines
- British Menopause Society
- Women's Health Concern
- Henpicked - Menopause Hub

Line Managers
- The compelling reasons: https://menopauseinthe workplace.co.uk/menopause-at-work/menopause-and-work-its-important/
- Menopause tribunals and employment law
  https://menopauseinthe workplace.co.uk/articles/menopause-tribunals-is-your-organisation-at-risk/
- CIPD podcast in which our founder Deborah Garlick talks about why taking menopause in the workplace seriously is so important
  https://www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/menopause
- Research from King's College about what women want
  https://menopauseinthe workplace.co.uk/menopause-at-work/what-do-working-menopausal-women-want/
- Government Report on Effects of Menopause Transition
Useful resources continued

Guidance:
- How to have a good conversation with a GP: top tips: https://henpicked.net/how-to-talk-to-your-gp-about-menopause/
- National Institute of Medicinal Herbalists https://www.nimh.org.uk/find-a-herbalist/
- Information on hysterectomy: https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/hysterectomy/
- Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI): https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk

Infographics:
- HRT Myths Uncovered - Primary Care Women's Health Forum
- British Menopause Society Menopause Infographic
- Understanding the Risks of Breast Cancer - Women's Health Concern Infographic
- HRT and Breast Cancer - Peppy Health
- British Menopause Society Survey Results Infographic
- Know your menopause poster

Books we recommend:
Menopause - the change for the better - Henpicked
Men... Let’s Talk Menopause - Ruth Devlin
The one stop guide to menopause - Kathy Abernethy