



Supporting employees through menopause

A guide for UK businesses





Why menopause matters in the workplace

Diversity and inclusion mean recognising and valuing all the different stages of life that employees experience.

Among these, menopause represents a natural transition that affects a significant portion of the workforce.

While it predominantly impacts women, it is important to recognise that transgender men, non-binary and intersex individuals may also experience menopause or similar symptoms.

Supporting employees through this pivotal phase is more than just a matter of health and wellbeing – it's a cornerstone to building an inclusive workplace culture and thriving workplace that supports open communication and psychological safety.

This guide offers businesses practical strategies to support employees going through menopause, covering legal responsibilities, policy creation, management training and making the workplace more accommodating.

Understanding menopause

Menopause typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, signalling the end of menstrual cycles.

The years leading up to menopause, known as perimenopause, are often accompanied by a range of physical and psychological symptoms, such as hot flushes, night sweats, mood swings, fatigue, anxiety and difficulty concentrating.

Every person's experience with menopause is different. Factors such as genetics, lifestyle, and overall health

can influence when it starts, how long it lasts and the severity of symptoms. Additionally, surgical procedures, medical treatments or certain health conditions can induce menopause earlier than usual.

Recognising the diverse experiences ensures that support measures are inclusive and tailored to meet the needs of all affected employees, promoting a respectful and understanding workplace culture.



Navigating legal obligations: what employers need to know

In recent years, menopause discrimination in the workplace has garnered significant attention.

While dedicated legislation is still on the horizon, UK employers are obligated under existing laws to support employees experiencing menopause.

Creating a supportive workplace culture around menopause also helps ensure psychological safety, which is just as critical as physical safety in meeting duty of care requirements.

Key legal considerations:

- **Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Guidance:** In early 2024, the EHRC released guidelines outlining employers' legal responsibilities toward employees going through menopause. This guidance serves as a vital resource for ensuring you provide the right support.
- **Equality Act 2010:** If menopause symptoms significantly impact an employee's daily life,

they may be considered a disability under this act. This means employers must make reasonable adjustments, such as offering flexible working hours, allowing extra time to prepare for meetings, or providing cooling aids.

Employees going through menopause can also be protected against discrimination based on sex and age. Unfair treatment due to menopause symptoms could lead to legal consequences for employers.

Menopause is not limited to cisgender women. Transgender men, non-binary, and intersex individuals may also experience it. Your policies and support systems should be inclusive and sensitive to all gender identities.

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:** Under this act, employers must ensure the physical and psychological safety of employees. Conducting menopause-specific risk assessments helps meet these obligations by identifying factors, such as workload or temperature, that could worsen symptoms.



Why compliance matters:

Failing to meet these legal obligations doesn't just open the door to discrimination claims – it can also tarnish your company's reputation and lead to costly financial penalties.

By proactively supporting employees through menopause, you are not only avoiding legal risks but also demonstrating your commitment to their wellbeing and equality.





Training line managers: busting myths and building understanding

Equipping your line managers with the right knowledge is crucial for cultivating a truly supportive workplace.

Despite progress, myths and taboos around menopause still persist, often leading to misunderstandings and missed opportunities for support. Here's what your managers need to know:

- **Awareness and education:** Alongside educating managers on the wide range of menopause symptoms and how these can affect work performance and wellbeing, raise awareness throughout the organisation. Offer training or webinars to all employees to normalise conversations and foster greater understanding. This helps promote open communication, which is vital to the success of your support efforts.
- **Effective communication:** Equip managers with the skills to initiate and navigate sensitive conversations respectfully and confidentially.

- **Challenging stigmas:** Help managers dispel common myths and misconceptions about menopause, fostering a more open and supportive culture.
- **Inclusivity training:** Ensure managers understand that menopause can affect individuals of different genders and encourage them to offer inclusive support.
- **Policy knowledge:** Train managers on the organisation's menopause policies and procedures, including how to implement reasonable adjustments and support measures effectively.

By empowering managers with the right knowledge and resources, you can ensure that employees feel supported and understood during their menopausal transition.

Implementing supportive measures

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Appoint a Menopause Champion

A 'Menopause Champion' can be a game-changer for your organisation. This person's role is to:

- **Provide support:** Act as a go-to person for employees seeking advice or help.
- **Raise awareness:** Promote menopause awareness and ensure it is included in health and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Work with HR:** Collaborate with HR and management to ensure your company's approach to menopause is effective and inclusive.

In addition to their responsibilities, they can help facilitate initiatives such as menopause coffee breaks or support groups. These spaces enable employees to connect, share advice and offer peer support, helping to foster a supportive community within the workplace.

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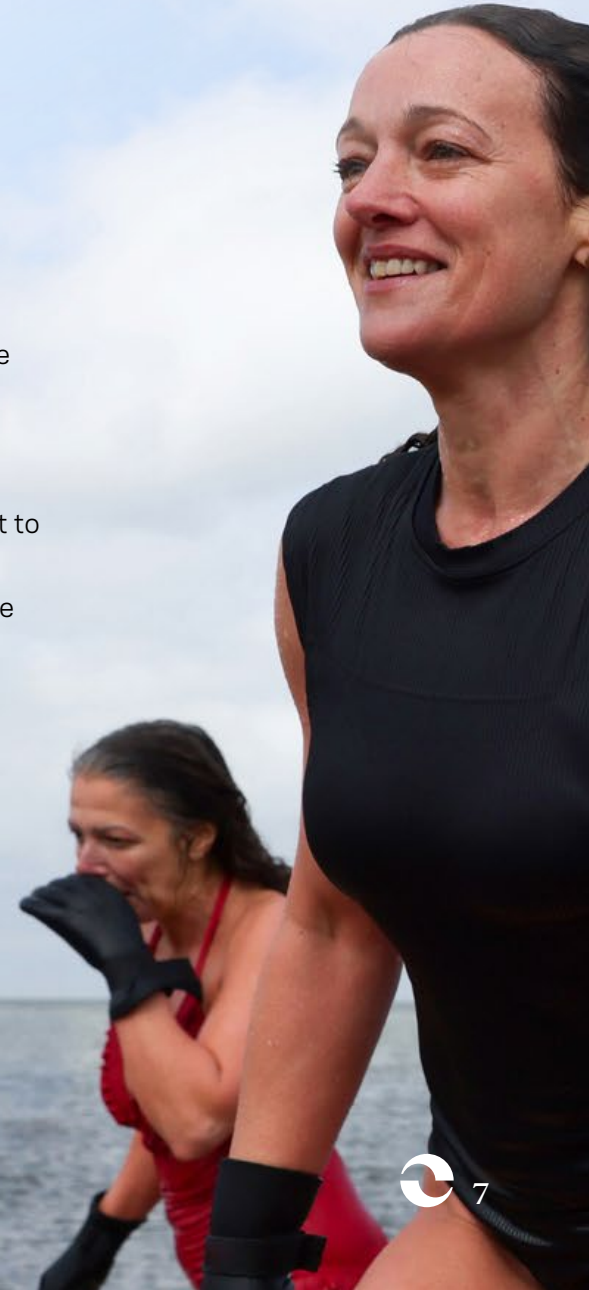
Create a menopause policy

Developing a dedicated menopause policy or including menopause in your company's wellbeing policy is an essential step towards formalising support. This demonstrates a commitment to an inclusive culture and can set your organisation up for a Menopause Friendly Accreditation.

You should include details on your:

- **Commitment:** A clear statement of the organisation's commitment to supporting employees experiencing menopause.
- **Inclusivity:** Define who the policy covers, making sure it is inclusive of transgender, non-binary, and intersex employees.
- **Support:** Outline the support available, such as flexible working, access to Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) and how to request workplace adjustments.
- **Confidential processes:** Provide clear guidance on how employees can confidentially raise concerns or seek support.

Such a policy not only supports affected employees but also demonstrates your dedication to fostering an inclusive workplace.



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Encourage open communication

Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing menopause is vital. This can be achieved by:

- **Raising awareness and educating:** Offer webinars or training sessions to build awareness and educate employees at all levels.
- **Normalising conversations:** Promote a culture where health topics, including menopause, are openly discussed.
- **Offering confidential support:** Ensure employees know they can speak to HR or their line manager in confidence.
- **Regularly signposting resources:** Make information about menopause support, both within your organisation and through external services, easily accessible.



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Make practical workplace adjustments

Supporting employees with practical adjustments can ease the challenges of menopause. Consider:

- **Temperature control:** Allow employees to adjust their workspace temperature or provide access to fans or cooler areas.
- **Uniform adjustments:** Offer more comfortable or breathable clothing options where uniforms are required.
- **Flexible working:** Provide options for flexible hours or remote working to accommodate symptoms that may affect regular work schedules.
- **Rest areas:** Create quiet, comfortable spaces where employees can take a break if needed.

These adjustments not only support employee wellbeing but can also enhance productivity and job satisfaction.

5

Adopt a flexible, personalised approach

Menopause affects everyone differently, so a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to work. Instead, focus on collaborating with each employee to identify what adjustments or support would benefit them most.

Maintain an open dialogue with employees to ensure that the support provided remains effective as their symptoms or circumstances change.



Building a supportive and inclusive workplace culture

Supporting employees through menopause goes far beyond legal compliance. It's about nurturing a workplace that is healthy, inclusive and vibrant.

A supportive workplace culture starts at the top. If your organisation's leadership and board aren't aligned with the importance of this issue, meaningful change is unlikely to occur.

It's essential that senior leadership endorse and champion a menopause-inclusive culture, which ties directly into wider wellbeing goals and psychological safety in the workplace.

By training managers, implementing thoughtful policies and providing practical support, you can ensure that all employees feel valued and supported during this significant life stage.

Addressing menopause in the workplace isn't just about policy – it's an opportunity to break down outdated taboos, champion gender equality and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the wellbeing of every employee.

By taking proactive steps, you can create an environment where the entire workforce, regardless of gender or life stage, can thrive.





If you're interested in learning more about Menopause+, contact Debra Clark on menopause@everywhen.co.uk

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