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Menopause in the workplace

Supporting your employees mental and emotional health.





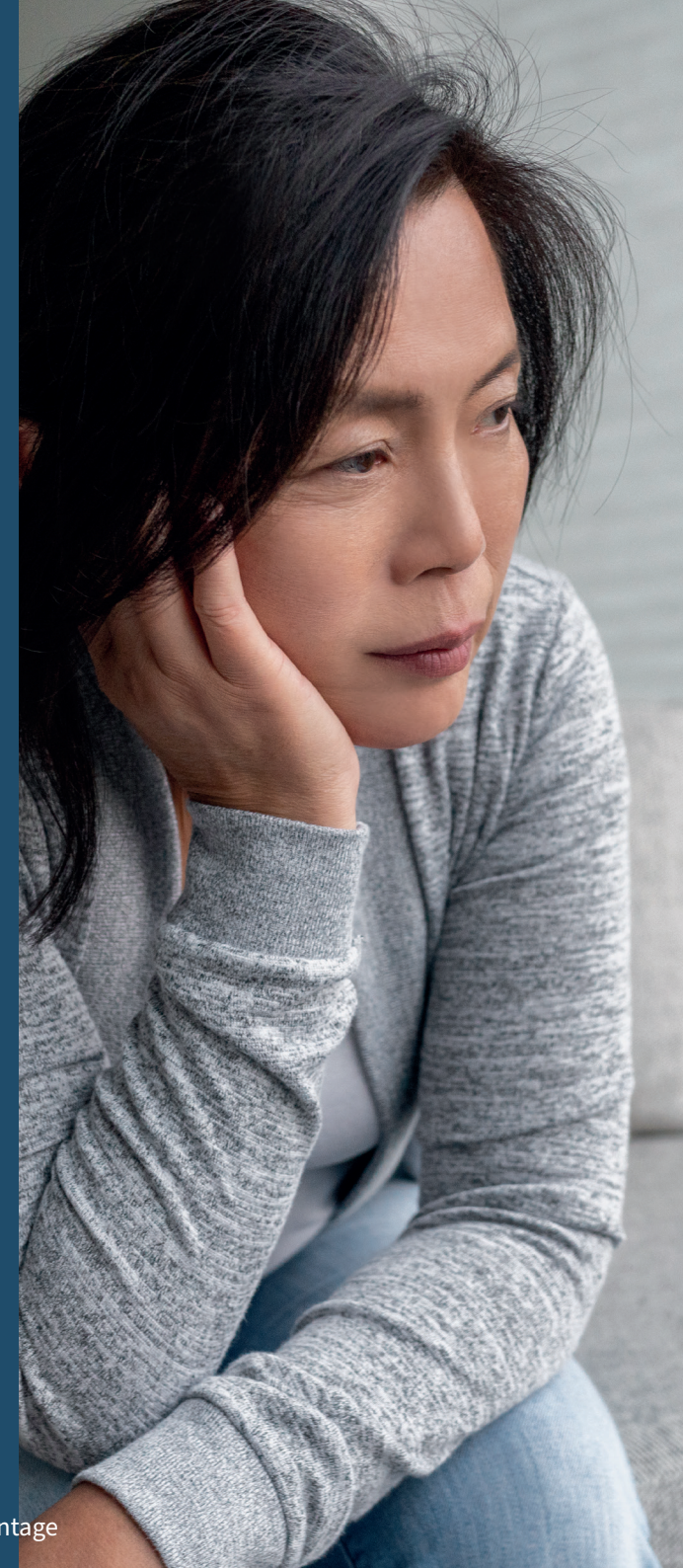
Menopause can significantly impact a person's life, putting them through emotional, physical, and mental struggles.

It's an issue that will likely affect many employees in your organisation, as UK statistics suggest that approximately

13 million people are either peri or postmenopausal

As an employer, it is your responsibility to step in—and make changes to support those going through this. You must work to understand the impacts of menopause and how you can support staff going through this. So that's what we'll aim to provide in this guide.

Firstly we'll look at what menopause is and how it affects individuals in their working lives. We'll also look at why it's vital to support employees with menopause at work—and how you can do this.



What is menopause and how does it affect work life?

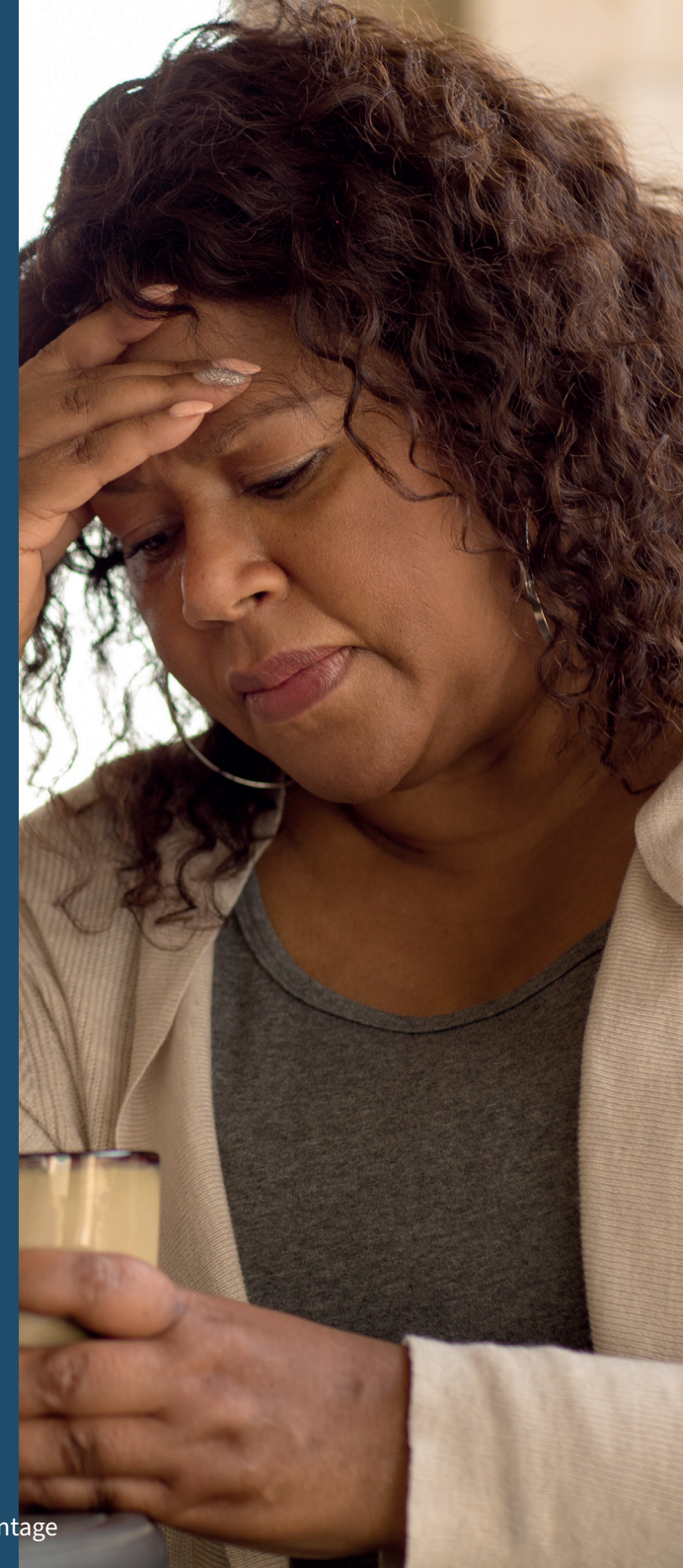
Menopause is a natural stage of ageing that individuals will usually experience between the ages of 45 and 55 (when oestrogen levels begin to decline). During this time, a person will stop having periods due to lower hormone levels.

Its estimated that there are **4 million** more workers aged 50 and over today than there were in 2000

As of 2020, there are **9.3 million** people aged 50-64 in work in the UK

With more people working throughout the menopause than ever before, it's vital that employers put support systems in place for their people.

The menopause transition affects everyone differently. The signs and symptoms vary from person to person; and are often misunderstood. Many employees don't disclose their symptoms for fear of discrimination-meaning they may be suffering in silence.



What are the symptoms of menopause?

- ✓ Hot flashes
- ✓ Insomnia and night sweats
- ✓ Irregular periods and heavy bleeding
- ✓ Painful menstruation cramps
- ✓ Weight gain and slowed metabolism
- ✓ Vaginal irritation
- ✓ Joint stiffness, aches, and pains
- ✓ Recurrent urinary tract infections

Individuals going through menopause can also experience psychological difficulties, including:



Depression



Anxiety



Panic attacks



Mood swings



Irritability



Problems with memory



Loss of confidence

We know that these health issues can have a huge impact on day-to-day life, leaving many Individuals struggling to cope, feeling frustrated or forgetful, and low on confidence in their abilities.



The impact of HRT

Hormone Replacement Therapy is a medication often prescribed for menopause that many individuals find helps relieve troubling symptoms. For many, the benefits of HRT outweighs the risks. But it's also worth noting that some individuals do experience side effects that can create problems at work. These include nausea, headaches, and leg cramps.

For some individuals, it can feel like an endless cycle of symptom after symptom, only to be alleviated by medication that leads to even more uncomfortable symptoms. This can be a hard time for anyone to go through and it helps if people around them can be supportive. The more you educate yourself about the menopause, the more you can be understanding and supportive of individuals who may be experiencing the above symptoms.

There is currently a shortage of HRT, that is leaving people across the UK without their usual medication. Without the medication they are used to, many individuals will experience debilitating symptoms once more. So it's worth keeping this in mind when discussing the topic with employees.

Menopausal symptoms and cancer treatment

While you might associate menopause and menopausal symptoms with women in a certain age bracket, this isn't always the case. Certain treatments for cancer can affect the ovaries, leading to early menopause for some women.

The treatments that can cause early menopause include:

- ✓ Chemotherapy
- ✓ Surgery to remove both ovaries
- ✓ Radiotherapy to the pelvis

Hormonal treatments for breast cancer may also cause menopausal symptoms or temporary menopause.

It's important to remember this as an employer. Health issues like these could be affecting any one of your employees. Be careful about making assumptions before you understand an employee's bigger picture.



Menopause statistics: what's the story?

It's hard to understand the scope of menopause and its effects without going through it yourself. But diving into the statistics allows us a deeper insight into how many individuals are affected and what they experience.

10 years

is how long menopause symptoms can last¹

90%

of individuals get menopausal symptoms³

80%

of individuals experience hot flushes during menopause⁵

1 in 100

individuals in the UK experience early menopause before the age of 40⁵

70%

of individuals experience some sort of mental health impact during menopause²

72%

of individuals in work say they feel unsupported throughout menopause⁴

Why is supporting menopause at work important?

Menopause symptoms cause **1 in 10** individuals to quit their jobs⁶

Work makes up a huge proportion of daily life. So if someone is struggling with menopause symptoms, it's almost guaranteed to impact their work in some way. But for many individuals, going to work and being successful is beneficial. It provides a sense of fulfilment and helps boost self-esteem.

As an employer, you must support employees with any mental or physical health issue they might face—you have a responsibility to look after their wellbeing. And not only does this mean employees then feel valued in their roles, but it also improves morale, boosts engagement and retains valuable talent within the organisation.

How to support your employees throughout menopause at work

Menopause doesn't have to be taboo. You can support your employees and create a positive, menopause-friendly workplace by implementing the recommendations below.

Education is key

Gain a better understanding of menopause by researching the subject and providing training to staff. By becoming more knowledgeable on the issue, managers and supervisors will naturally be more approachable and understanding of any arising concerns.

Help strengthen relationships

Ask employees how they're feeling and conduct regular check-ins. These check-ins will provide a space where employees can raise any issues and discuss potential actions you might agree on together.

Provide reasonable adjustments

Look into reasonable adjustments for employees when their mental or physical health is affected by menopause. These might include flexible work hours, reduced workload, or additional equipment.

Promote a health balanced lifestyle

Smoking and alcohol can lead to declining mental and physical health issues along side the menopause. It's also been shown that a healthy balanced diet can help to improve bone strength. For this reason, we recommend promoting a healthy lifestyle at work in any way you can. Be that via posters, fruit deliveries or educational talks.

Make your communication inclusive

A lot of the language around menopause excludes transgender and non-binary people. This can be extremely isolating for individuals, leading to discrimination and feelings of being misunderstood. Trans men and non-binary people may experience menopause if they keep their ovaries, so it's important to make all your communications inclusive.

Express the importance of sleep

Many individuals will struggle with sleep throughout the menopause. Sleep is such a vital component of physical and mental health, especially during difficult times. Help your employees understand the importance of sleep by running a sleep hygiene workshop with your team.

Encourage physical exercise

Research shows that physical exercise can be really helpful throughout the menopause. Individuals should focus on body weight exercises and strength training exercises. As an employer, you might wish to encourage exercise with incentives like a step challenge or discounted gym membership.

Treat cases individually

Every person in your organisation is different—so treat each case individually. Don't assume that every menopause-related problem has the same solution. Try to be non-judgemental when listening and consider a range of solutions or adjustments.

Review all issues raised

Raising a health issue to a manager can be difficult, especially if the supervisor is of the opposite sex. If available, you could arrange for a manager of the same sex or HR representative as this might make the employee feel more at ease when discussing any menopause issues.

Sign the pledge

The [Menopause Workplace Pledge](#) shows your commitment to recognising menopause as a workplace issue, talking openly about it, and actively supporting your employees.

Improve wellbeing support

The symptoms that arise as a result of menopause can be extremely disruptive and frustrating to experience. You can help alleviate some of these problems by signposting employees to the helpline. Check out our [Workplace Wellbeing guide](#) for more information.

How to support partners and couples

While they might not be experiencing physical symptoms themselves, partners who are supporting someone through the menopause can also experience difficulties. Menopause can have a huge impact on relationships and it can be challenging when you're unsure of how to support a loved one. As an employer, it's important to be aware of how an employee's life might be affected by this. Relationship problems can lead to decreased wellbeing and motivation at work.

If an employee discloses that they are struggling with issues relating to their partner and menopause then try to check in on them regularly. Providing regular catch ups with managers allows employees a space to explore how they are feeling and raise any issues. If you have mental health support in place, you can also signpost them to what's available and explain how to access this.

Menopause at work policy

Another way you can begin to tackle misconceptions in the workplace is by creating a menopause policy. Here are some common points you might wish to include:

Communication

It's essential for employees to feel comfortable talking about health concerns like menopause. Discuss how it may affect them during work and how you can offer support.

Confidentiality

Once an employee brings up the subject of menopause, keep the conversation confidential. Employees should know they can trust your organisation with personal problems.

Understanding

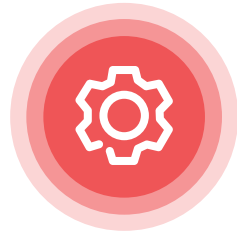
You provide workshops on menopause, rights at work and how to handle situations with employees. (Find out more about our workshops on page 9).

To-do list for a menopause-friendly workplace

Now you have all the information you need to ensure that your workspace never overlooks an employee going through menopause. Check below to ensure you're doing all you can to support your people.



Provide educational materials, talks, and workshops on the menopause



Consider reasonable adjustments you can provide to employees



Sign the Menopause Workplace Pledge



Signpost to employee wellbeing support



Create a menopause policy



Carry out one-to-one meetings with all colleagues



Menopause support with Health Assured

We know just how important it is that employees are supported throughout the menopause. So that's why we're continually expanding the menopause support we offer.

How can our Employee Assistance Programme help?

- ✓ A 24/7 mental health helpline
- ✓ Professional counselling
- ✓ Wellbeing support and guidance for your managers
- ✓ My Health Advantage health and wellbeing app
- ✓ Feedback on how your employees are engaging with the programme

Signposting to our EAP can help you:

Reduce anxiety by

56%

Reduce Workplace stress by

19%

Reduce depression by

53%

Menopause workshop

Our menopause workshop is verified by Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The workshop is provided by our wellbeing specialists who offer sensitive, empathetic teachings that will teach you how to support someone going through the menopause.

The aims and objectives of the workshop are:

- ✓ To understand what the menopause is and how this can effect the workplace
- ✓ To gain an understanding of the symptoms of the menopause and how you can support those experiencing this in the workplace
- ✓ We'll also provide an open forum for you to ask any questions you might have around the topic.
- ✓ To learn how to create an open, inclusive and supportive culture

"The feedback from these courses has been amazing and we find that many organisations have reported benefits by up skilling their managers and senior leaders with this course. When you provide this education for your teams it helps them handle situations positively and confidently." Kayleigh Frost - Head of Clinical Support

Who can benefit from our menopause workshop?

Our menopause workshop helps your teams understand how this transition impacts working life. When your staff members have this understanding, they can empathise with employees and support them at work. Having this prior training is great for managers, because it allows them to have more productive conversations with their team members. When positive conversations happen, it encourages employees to communicate at work and this allows you to support your teams in the best way you can.

The menopause workshop can be extremely helpful for:

- ✓ Line managers
- ✓ Individuals
- ✓ Senior leaders
- ✓ HR teams

Menopause CBT

We are now partnering with Rightsteps to provide a tailored Cognitive Behavioural Therapy solution for people experiencing menopause symptoms. Rightsteps are a social enterprise and charity that have provided health and social care for almost 60 years. The team is made up of a qualified and clinically experienced management team that includes clinical psychologists, CBT Therapists and counsellors. Rightsteps provide a specialised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy programme that helps people:

- ✓ To manage problematic symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats
- ✓ Effective strategies for managing anxiety and depression
- ✓ Functional ways to reduce stress and overly negative thoughts that can make symptoms worse

Rightsteps

To learn more about our menopause workshop, discuss menopause CBT or find out more about how our EAP can help your employees, get in touch with us today via the options below.



Call us - find the number in your welcome pack or online portal



Speak to your Relationship Manager



Send us an email: client.services@healthassured.co.uk

¹ NHS. Bridgewater Community Healthcare. The Menopause: <http://www.bridgewater.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/The-Menopause-what-to-expect-when-you-are-expecting-the-menopause.pdf>

² Livi. Let's talk about: menopause and mental health: <https://www.livi.co.uk/your-health/lets-talk-about-menopause-and-mental-health/>

³ The Menopause Charity: <https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>

⁴ Nuffield Health: <https://www.nuffieldhealth.com/article/one-in-four-with-menopause-symptoms-concerned-about-ability-to-cope-with-life>

⁵ Menopause support: https://menopausesupport.co.uk/?page_id=60

⁶ Sky News: <https://news.sky.com/story/menopausal-symptoms-forcing-one-in-10-women-in-the-uk-to-quit-their-job-survey-12603809>

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