

# Menopause at Work



**Live Better With**  
Menopause

*for*



# Live Better With Menopause

## About us:

We curate practical products for women to help bring some relief from the wide-ranging symptoms of the perimenopause and menopause including hot flushes, mood swings, loss of libido, skin changes and anxiety

Each product has been recommended by women going through the menopause, experts, and healthcare professionals



## Menopause at Work - the legal bit

In the UK, the Health and Safety at Work Act requires all employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees

Employers must do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include any specific risks to menopausal women if they are employed

They also have a duty not to discriminate under the 2010 Equality Act



## Why is the menopause a workplace issue?

Women now make up almost half the UK workforce and there are an estimated three and a half million women over the age of 50 currently in work.

On top of that, approximately 1-10% of the population experience an early menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency (same symptoms as the menopause and will become infertile)

**For some, going through the menopause may be uneventful and may not impact on their working life but for others, it may become increasingly difficult to function effectively at work and their working conditions may exacerbate their symptoms**

A study into the menopause and work, led by Professor Amanda Griffiths at the University of Nottingham, reported that nearly half of the women surveyed found it somewhat or fairly difficult to cope with work during the menopausal transition

# Why is the menopause a workplace issue?

*Continued*

For too long, the menopause has been seen as a private matter

And because of this, managers have no awareness of the issues involved

This means many women feel that they have to hide their symptoms and are less likely to ask for the adjustments that may help them

**We believe this must change**

**Making the workplace comfortable for menopause is a joint effort between HR/OH, line managers and women themselves.** Appropriate support from employers is essential

**It is likely to reduce the risk of stress, help maintain performance, enhance employee loyalty and mean women stay in the workforce for longer**

Hormonal changes during perimenopause and menopause lead to menstrual irregularities. **Symptoms include:**

**Most common symptoms:**

Hot flushes  
Night sweats  
Irregular periods (including heavy periods and period pain)  
Intimate body problems (including vaginal dryness and loss of libido)  
Weight gain  
Joint and muscle pain  
Fatigue  
Mood changes (including anxiety, mood swings, low mood, stress and panic attacks)

**Other symptoms:**

Digestive problems  
Bloating  
Depression  
Nausea  
Itchy, dry skin  
Dry eyes  
Weak bladder  
Brittle hair and nails  
Difficulty concentrating (brain fog)  
Memory lapses  
Dizziness  
Headaches

# Menopause at Work in Numbers

3.5 million women  
aged 50 and over  
are in employment,  
a 72% rise since  
1994

41% of women with  
menopause  
symptoms say it  
affects their work

70% of those  
women don't tell  
their employers  
why they're  
struggling

Two-thirds say  
they have no  
support at work

50% of women  
want their  
employer to  
provide more info  
on coping with  
menopause at work



The majority of women are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to line managers, most of whom are men or younger than them

71% of menopausal women do not feel prepared for the symptoms 'the change' brings

48% felt their mental health had suffered

25% of women going through the menopause had considered leaving work because of their experiences.

Where women had taken time off work to deal with their symptoms, only half of them disclosed the real reason for absence to their line managers



# Things you can do as a HR/OH lead:

As an OH or HR representative, you can do nine things:

1. Carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not symptoms of menopause or perimenopause may be contributing to wellbeing at work
2. Carry out a risk assessment to consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. Issues that could be looked at depend on the workplace but include **temperature and ventilation and the materials used in any uniform or corporate clothing provided to women workers** as well as **toilet facilities and access to cold water**
3. Signpost to appropriate, trusted sources of help and advice
4. Provide support and advice to line managers in determining and agreeing on reasonable adjustments

## Things you can do as a HR/OH lead: *Continued*

5. Attend training sessions and develop briefing sessions for staff
6. Ensure that all line managers have been trained to be aware of how the menopause can affect work and what adjustments may be necessary to support women who are experiencing the menopause
7. Ensure that the menopause is highlighted in health and wellbeing practices
8. Ensure guidance on how to deal with the menopause at work is freely and easily available in the workplace
9. Edit sickness absence procedures to be flexible enough to cater for menopause-related sickness absence

## Useful questions Occupational Health reps or HR managers can ask in order to determine whether a work environment is menopause-friendly:

- Does each workplace have **temperature control and windows** that can be opened?
- Do **uniforms** stop women from being able to remove clothing and cool down and **are women able to change clothes during the day** if they have numerous hot sweats?
- Are **regular breaks allowed for toilet breaks** (periods can become very heavy)?
- Should you consider a **peer support group**?
- Do women have **female senior peers** they can turn to if they are not comfortable talking to a male manager?

## Things you can do as a Line Manager

Women who are experiencing the menopause need support from line management. Like with any longstanding health-related condition, this is crucial and can make a major difference to how a woman will deal with the issues arising:

A **workplace wellbeing policy that recognises the menopause** is a good starting point along with raising managers' and colleagues' awareness of the menopause and its interface with work. This should also include providing information for the woman on how they can alleviate their symptoms themselves and find support

**Regular, informal conversations** between manager and employee may enable discussion of changes in health, including issues relating to the menopause. It may be valuable simply to **acknowledge this is a normal stage of life and that adjustments can easily be made**. Such conversations can identify support at work that can help women remain fully productive and encourage them to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP

## Things you can do as a manager

*Continued*

- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
- Allow women to report sick to women managers
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to
- Working time arrangements should be flexible enough to ensure that they meet the needs of menopausal women, who may require leaving suddenly. They may also need more breaks during the day
- Are there simple, practical ways to help? For example: **Can they be moved to a desk closer to a window? Can cold drinking water be provided? Can personal desk fans be provided? Can sanitary products be made available in washrooms?**

# How Live Better With can help



**Live Better With Menopause currently offers to the following services as part of our Menopause at Work Programme. Services include:**

- Managers Training Programme
- Occupational Health/HR Advisor Training Programme
- Employee Programme
- Free downloadable/printable posters, guides and information postcards
- Menopause Desk Drawer Kit: A discreet kit to help your employees cope at work with hot flushes, fatigue, brain fog and other menopause symptoms
- Menopause Bathroom Basket: Office loo essentials for women going through menopause - available as a handy renewable subscription

## Menopause Support Group

Live Better With Menopause has launched an online support group to offer a safe place for women going through perimenopause and menopause to share their experiences and voice their concerns.

It's also a space to give and receive tips on how to deal with the symptoms that peri/menopause can bring. Anyone experiencing perimenopause and menopause symptoms can join the group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/lbwmenopausesupport/>





**References:**

- **NHS**, available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/menopause/Pages/Menopausehome.aspx>
- **Griffiths, A et al (2010) Women's Experience of Working through the Menopause**, Institute of Work, Health & Organisations available at: [http://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Womens\\_Experience\\_of\\_Working\\_through\\_the\\_Menopause-Dec\\_2010.pdf](http://www.bohrf.org.uk/downloads/Womens_Experience_of_Working_through_the_Menopause-Dec_2010.pdf)
- **Faculty of Occupational Health Advice** on the menopause, available at: <http://www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-for-employers/dealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause>
- **TUC's** Supporting women through the menopause guide, available at: [https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TUC\\_menopause\\_0.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TUC_menopause_0.pdf)
- **Chief Medical Officer** annual report 2014: women's health, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officer-annual-report-2014-womens-health>
- **The menopause and work: A guide for UNISON safety reps**, available at: <http://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2013/06/On-line-Catalogue204723.pdf>
- **Menopause and Work – New Guidelines**, Dr Louise R Newson available at: <https://menopausedoctor.co.uk/early-menopause/menopause-work-new-guidelines/>

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