

# **SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE**

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## Introduction

Menopause has become a growing topic among businesses with more employees than ever before feeling empowered to speak up about their experiences. There has been a record number of tribunal cases in recent years in relation to employees' treatment at work while going through Menopause. It impacts a significant proportion of the working population so having an understanding and being mindful of menopause is a relevant topic to the modern workplace, and beneficial to businesses from the perspective of attracting and retaining talented people.

## What is menopause?

Menopause is a natural process when a woman's periods gradually come to a permanent stop. Menopause will affect women differently, but usually occurs somewhere between the ages of 40 and 60. It most commonly affects women between the ages of 45 and 55, but early or premature menopause can also occur.

Menopause can also be induced as therapy for other conditions, such as endometriosis, or may be triggered as a result of cancer treatment. It's worth noting trans men and non-binary employees may also experience menopause-related symptoms.

## How can it affect employees at work?

Approximately 80% of women in the UK will experience some menopausal symptoms, including but not limited to:

- hot flushes and night sweats;
- feeling the heart racing and palpitations;
- difficulty sleeping;
- changes in mood, such as feeling tired, irritable, depressed or anxious;
- difficulty concentrating;
- poor memory; and
- urinary problems, such as recurrent urinary tract infections and loss of bladder control.

Symptoms typically last for around four years but can last for up to 12.

A 2020 study by "The Menopause Experts" identified there were approximately 900,000 women who resigned or took a lesser role because they did not feel that they could speak up about their menopause.

## How can clubs support employees going through the menopause?

It is important we take into consideration the information we now know on the impact of the menopause and strive to make positive changes to support employees. Four key beneficial ways club management can support employees are:

- Develop and implement a menopause policy. As menopause is likely to affect many members of your workforce, and/or their partners and family, so having a policy in place should be the first step in supporting employees.

## GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions, or would like further support, please get in touch with Katie Dunn or Katie Bremner by calling 0141 221 2984 or by email at [clubshr@aab.uk](mailto:clubshr@aab.uk).

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- Help to break through the silence in your organisation through circulating guidance such as this document. Additionally, as some employees or management may not have any or little knowledge on the impact the menopause can have, training can be a useful way to normalise discussion and enable individuals to have deeper understanding of what women are going through.
- Identify reasonable adjustments for those suffering with the menopause to the point it is affecting their ability to carry out their role. Just as you would for any other employee who may be struggling with their work due to a medical condition; we should investigate, discuss and implement required adjustments.
- Get your senior leadership team on board on understanding potential symptoms and supporting effected employees. It should be a company wide effort to ensure we are supporting those effected and that starts with leadership. Senior management can set the tone of how the business as a whole views the need for support and understanding of the natural process.

## What happens when Menopause is left unaddressed?

As discussed, there have been a record number of tribunal cases regarding the issue, namely due to employees feeling some form of discrimination. Depending on its effects, the menopause could meet the statutory definition of disability under the Equalities Act 2010.

As such, employers should be conscious of disciplining or treating an employee different for actions that could be linked to their menopause symptoms, as they will be protected under the act and able to raise a claim. There are examples of this where employees have won tribunal claims by evidencing the reasons for their dismissal were linked to effects of Menopause but were not properly investigated or taken into consideration by their employer.

Employers should also be aware of the risk that some managers may ignore the impact of menopausal symptoms because of stereotypical attitudes that it is simply "a women's issue".

A common mistake by managers is to assume the Menopause effects all women the same. There is a well-known example of a tribunal cases won by an employee where the manager assumed the employee had the same reaction to Menopause as the other women he knew in his life and didn't properly look into her symptoms as per the company policy.

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