

Menopause Awareness Month: *building understanding and support at work*

October

October marks Menopause Awareness Month, an opportunity to improve understanding of a life stage that affects millions of people – yet is still often misunderstood. Although awareness of menopause has increased significantly in recent years, many misconceptions remain. For some, menopause is viewed as a short-term event associated only with hot flushes. In reality, it is a natural transition that can affect people physically, emotionally and psychologically, sometimes over a number of years. Because many people experience menopause later on in their careers, understanding its impact has become an increasingly important workplace wellbeing issue. Creating supportive environments benefits not only those experiencing menopause but also managers, colleagues and organisations as a whole.

October 18th
*is World
Menopause Day*

Understanding menopause

Menopause occurs when periods stop as a result of changing hormone levels. In the UK, the average age for menopause is around 51, although symptoms can begin years earlier during what is known as perimenopause.

Experiences vary significantly from person to person. Some individuals experience relatively mild symptoms, while others find that symptoms have a substantial impact on everyday life.

Common symptoms can include:



Hot flushes



Anxiety



Memory challenges



Night sweats



Changes in mood



Headaches



Sleep difficulties



Brain fog or difficulty concentrating



Joint pain



Fatigue

The workplace impact

Many symptoms associated with menopause can have a direct impact on work.

Sleep disruption, for example, may lead to fatigue and reduced concentration during the day. Difficulties with memory or focus can increase frustration, particularly for individuals working in demanding roles.

For someone experiencing anxiety, low confidence or mood changes, workplace interactions may feel more challenging than usual.

The difficulty is that many of these symptoms are not visible to others. A colleague may appear perfectly well on the surface while privately managing a host of different symptoms.

Historically, menopause was not often discussed in professional settings. As a result, many people felt they had to manage symptoms independently without support or understanding.

Fortunately, attitudes are beginning to change.

Under the UK Employment Rights Act, from spring 2027 certain employers will have to publish an 'action plan' highlighting the steps that they are taking to support employees during the menopause.

In addition to this, more and more organisations are recognising menopause as an important workplace health issue and are taking steps to create supportive environments where people feel comfortable discussing their needs.



Why conversations matter

One of the biggest challenges surrounding menopause is silence.

Many people worry about being judged or perceived differently if they discuss symptoms at work. Others may not know what support is available or feel uncertain about how to begin a conversation.

Open and respectful discussions can help break down these barriers.

Managers do not need to become menopause experts, but they can make a significant difference by listening, showing empathy and creating opportunities for employees to discuss any support they may require.

Likewise, colleagues can contribute by helping normalise conversations and challenging outdated assumptions or stereotypes.



Practical ways to provide support

Supportive workplaces are often built through small actions rather than large-scale interventions.

Examples might include:

- **Listen without judgement and avoid making assumptions**
- **Be patient and understanding if a colleague is experiencing symptoms that affect their work**
- **Challenge myths or stereotypes if you encounter them**
- **Normalise open conversations about menopause in the workplace**
- **Encourage colleagues to seek support if they are struggling**

Importantly, support should always recognise that experiences differ. What works for one person may not be appropriate for another.

The most effective approach is often to ask what would be helpful and work together to identify practical solutions.

Creating a culture of understanding

Menopause Awareness Month provides an opportunity to continue a conversation that extends far beyond October.

Workplaces are strongest when people feel able to bring their whole selves to work and access support when they need it. That applies to physical health, mental health and major life transitions such as menopause.

By improving understanding, challenging stigma and encouraging supportive conversations, we can help create workplace cultures where everyone feels valued, respected and able to perform at their best.

Greater awareness is not simply about menopause. It is about recognising that health and wellbeing look different for different people, and that understanding those differences benefits us all.

Menopause and wellbeing

While menopause can present challenges, it is important to remember that it is a natural life stage, not an illness.

Many people continue to thrive professionally and personally throughout menopause. With the right understanding, support and self-care strategies, symptoms can often be managed effectively. Looking after wellbeing can include prioritising sleep, maintaining regular physical activity, eating a balanced diet, managing stress and seeking medical advice when needed.

For some people, treatment options, therapies, and additional support may also be available through healthcare professionals.



