

Menopause and the workplace

Addressing menopause at work can benefit both employers and employees.

Employers who make workplaces responsive to gender and diversity will be better able to attract and retain skilled and talented staff. Menopause is a gender- and age-equity issue and remains one of the last “unspoken” issues in workplaces.

For many women, menopause is a natural stage of life. But menopausal symptoms may also be caused by interventions such as surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy or medications.

Some employees even consider a career break or retiring when their work is affected by menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes, sweats, sleep disturbance and mental health issues. In the workplace, difficulties with memory and concentration may be particularly difficult. A 2021 study found 83% of women experiencing menopause were affected at work, but only 70% would feel comfortable speaking with their manager about it.¹

The following tips are based on global consensus recommendations for menopause in the workplace.²

How can employers and organisations improve menopause awareness?

The Australian Government has included promoting workforce participation as a priority area for older women.³

Addressing the lack of awareness of menopause is a major step employers can take to assist their organisation and workforce. Free resources for Australian workplaces and managers are available.⁴

Organisations can address the lack of menopause awareness by:

- improving understanding of menopause and prioritising health and wellbeing in the workplace
- ensuring employees with menopausal symptoms impacting their work are not stigmatised, discriminated against, bullied, or harassed
- recognising how work patterns could impact symptoms and allowing flexible working arrangements, where possible
- developing policies supportive of menopause as part of induction, training and development programs for employees
- including coverage of menopause in leave policies and assisting employees to access workplace healthcare
- providing training for managers and supervisors to understand menopause and how to have sensitive conversations about menopause at work.

MAIN POINTS

- Addressing menopause in the workplace can benefit both the organisation and employees with menopausal symptoms affecting their work
- Collaborating with employees and including menopausal health in policies can improve an inclusive organisational culture and avoid discrimination against employees with menopausal symptoms
- Workplaces can make changes to policies and the environment to support employees with symptoms
- Managers can promote discussions with employees who are open to discussing how their symptoms are impacting their work
- Managers can suggest workplace adjustments and occupational advice for employees to access strategies to improve their work experience
- Employees can speak with healthcare professionals about treatment options and self-help strategies for their symptoms

How can managers and supervisors improve menopause awareness?

Managers who are comfortable having sensitive conversations about menopause are in a better position to help create a positive workplace that improves quality of life, productivity, and motivation for all employees.

Managers and supervisors can contribute to a more inclusive workplace by:

- creating a supportive culture for people going through menopause
- enabling employees to discuss their menopausal symptoms without assuming everyone who experiences menopause will want to talk about it
- considering using occupational health professionals to advise on suitable arrangements for employees
- allowing flexibility of dress codes
- reviewing workplace temperature control and ventilation, including the ability to adjust temperature (eg. fans in work areas)
- allowing work breaks to manage severe symptoms
- promoting a healthy lifestyle in the workplace (eg. healthy snacks, lunchtime walking groups).

If you are an employee and have any concerns or questions about options to manage your menopausal symptoms, visit your doctor or go to the Find an AMS Doctor service on the AMS website.

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How can employees with menopausal symptoms improve their workplace experience?

Not all employees going through menopause want to discuss their situation with people at work. But if they wish, employees who are having health concerns at work, could consider:

- speaking with their manager or supervisor about menopause-related problems impacting their work
- seeking help and advice from employee support bodies if they feel unsupported with their health at work
- consulting with their doctor to discuss treatment options and self-help strategies
- speaking to occupational health or other healthcare professionals
- learning about any equity and occupational health and safety legislation and regulations for employees experiencing menopause at work
- assist in developing workplace policies or training programs to ensure menopause is meaningfully considered
- taking part in online support menopause support groups.

Where can you find more information about menopause and the workplace?

1. Circle In, *Driving the change: Menopause and the workplace*, 2021. Access here: <https://circlein.com/research-and-guides/menopause-at-work/>
2. Rees et al, Global consensus recommendations on menopause in the workplace: A European Menopause and Andropause Society (EMAS) position statement. Access here: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2021.06.006>
3. Australian Government, *National Women's Health Strategy 2020 to 2030*, 2020. Access here: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-womens-health-strategy-2020-2030>
4. Menopause Information Pack for Organizations (MIPO). Access website here: <https://www.menopauseatwork.org/>
5. Jean Hailes Foundation: [Menopause in the workplace | Jean Hailes](#)

Where can employers and employees find more information about menopause?

If your symptoms are bothering you, your doctor can help. Your doctor can tell you about the changes in your body and offer options for managing your symptoms.

Fact sheets:

- Menopause what are the symptoms? – <https://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/menopause-what-are-the-symptoms>
- Menopause before 40 and spontaneous premature ovarian insufficiency – <https://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/menopause-before-40-and-spontaneous-poi>
- Early menopause – chemotherapy and radiation therapy – <https://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/early-menopause-chemotherapy-and-radiation-therapy>

Infographics:

- Menopause what are the symptoms? – <https://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/infographics/menopause-what-are-the-symptoms>
- What is Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT) and is it safe? – <https://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/infographics/what-is-menopausal-hormone-therapy-and-is-it-safe>

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