

Menopause at Work - a Guide for Managers

The proportion of women in the Australian workforce has significantly increased over the past four decades, resulting in more women at work going through menopause. With the average age of menopause being 51 years, many women aged 45-55 years will experience moderate to severe symptoms. A 2021 study found that 83% of women experiencing menopause were affected at work, but only 70% would feel comfortable speaking with their manager about it.

Given the enormous prevalence of this condition, it is critical workplaces support women to ensure they remain engaged and valued members of the working population.

SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

Women can experience hot flushes, sweats, insomnia, fatigue and mental health issues including anxiety and mood changes. In addition, they can struggle with memory and concentration, which can impact their work. The severity of symptoms fluctuates amongst women, and in some circumstances, has led to a reduction in working hours, underemployment or unemployment for some women experiencing severe symptoms.

WORKPLACE RESPONSIBILITY AND LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS

Employers are required to provide a duty of care to their employees that ensures they are free from discrimination, including issues of gender and age. Workplaces that positively respond to gender and diversity can increase women's engagement, retention and contribution when they are at their most skilled and experienced. The starting point is to improve awareness of the issue so that women experiencing symptoms can feel safer and less stigmatised when seeking support.

HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS AND MANAGERS IMPROVE MENOPAUSE AWARENESS?

In supporting workforce participation for older women, the Australian Government have provided free resources for

Australian organisations and Managers. This is in recognition that the diversity of the menopause experience and the effect of menopause on employment are shaped not only by symptoms but also by the physical and psychosocial characteristics of the workplace environment. Important support avenues include the following:

- Creating a supportive culture that increases awareness whilst acknowledging women's experiences.
- Provision of resources and training to support managers in understanding menopause and how to have sensitive conversations about menopause at work.
- Ensuring leadership does not stigmatise or discriminate against women experiencing symptoms.
- Inclusion of menopausal support in relevant policies and induction processes.
- Provide ways of adjusting temperature and ventilation, e.g., providing fans, etc.
- Flexible work breaks to manage severe symptoms.
- Promotion of a healthy lifestyle through exercise programs and nutritional advice.

HOW CAN EMPLOYEES WITH MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS IMPROVE THEIR EXPERIENCE?

- Contact Converge. We have expert consultants who can support you with your mental health and wellbeing. Proven Therapies used on the broader population are also suitable for mental health symptoms associated with menopause.



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- Access nutritional support via Converge or a GP Mental Health Care Plan. Healthy choices can positively impact menopausal symptoms, so it is recommended that women consider a healthy diet, adequate intake of calcium and physical activity.
- Access GP support to discuss treatment options.
- Speak with their manager about how symptoms may be impacting their work and discuss any identified strategies that provide relief.
- Assist in developing policies and programs that positively influence workplace awareness and support.

RESOURCES

Circle In, Driving the change: Menopause and the workplace, 2021.

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>

Australian Menopause Society: Empowering Menopausal women; 2024. Website <https://www.menopause.org.au/>

Menopause Information Pack for Organisations (MIPO). Website <https://www.menopauseatwork.org/>



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