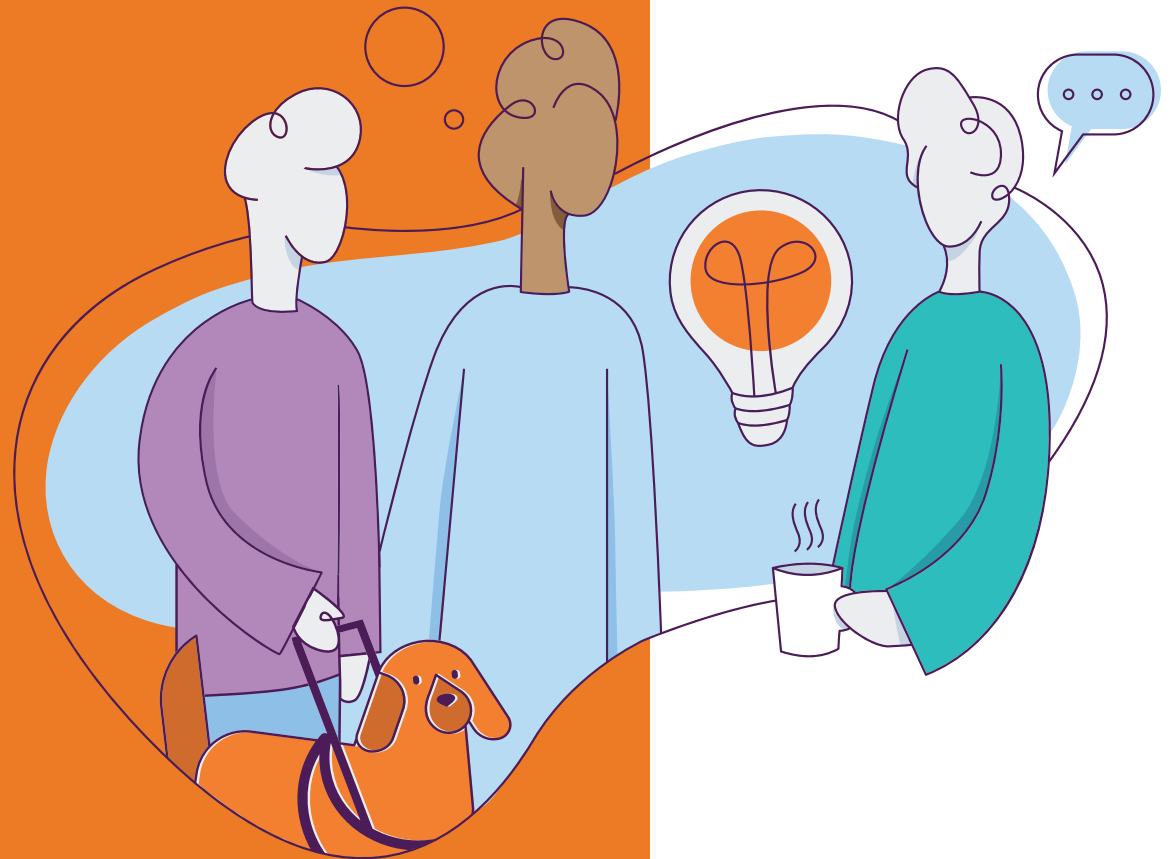




# SUPPORTING YOUR EMPLOYEES THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE



# What is the menopause?

Menopause is the point at which a woman's oestrogen levels decline, and they stop having periods, usually between the ages of 45-55.

All women experience the menopause, although some experience it earlier due to premature menopause. Early menopause can also be a side effect of some treatments, such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy, or a hysterectomy.

People typically experience menopausal symptoms for several years, so the menopause is best described as a transition rather than a one-off event. The length of the transitions varies greatly. Symptoms usually last about four years, but around one in 10 women experience them for up to 12 years.

Perimenopause is the phase before the menopause transition when a woman's hormone balance starts to change, and when they might start to experience symptoms. This can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.



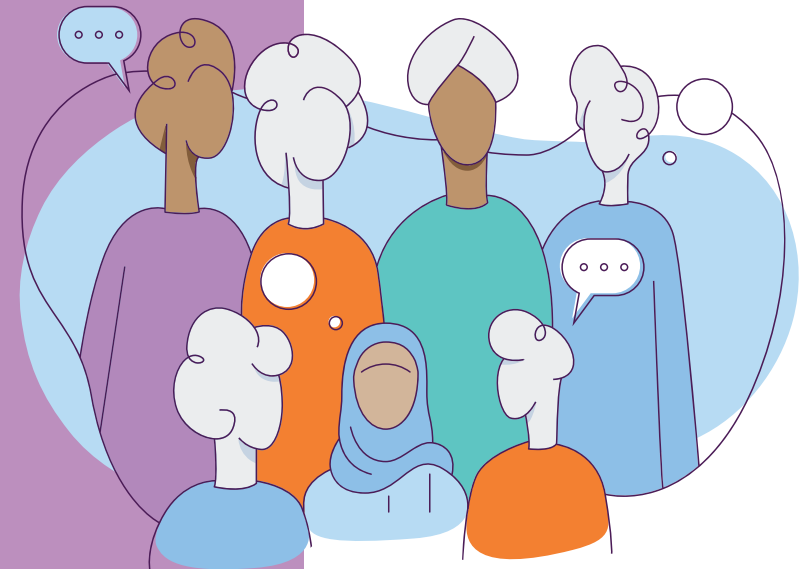
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the trans community. A transgender man (those who identify as male but were assigned female at birth) or an AFAB non-binary person (assigned female at birth but don't identify as a particular gender) will still experience natural menopause if their ovaries remain in place and they're not having hormone therapy. A transgender woman (those who identify as female but were assigned male at birth) might also experience menopausal symptoms related to hormone therapy.

## Why it's important to support your employees

Menopause symptoms can be both physical and psychological and can have a huge effect on someone's comfort and performance at work. Research has found that 90% of people suffering menopause symptoms think it impacts their performance. Symptoms vary and are different for everyone, but they can include:

- Memory loss
- Brain fog
- Difficulty, or reduced, concentrating
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Low confidence
- Embarrassment about discussing symptoms
- Hot flashes



- Night sweats
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Heavy periods

A lack of support for sufferers could lead to:

- Poor employee engagement and low morale
- Reduced performance and lost productivity
- High rates of sickness-related or even unauthorised time off
- Poor working relationships and conflict
- A damaged employer-employee relationship
- A loss of valuable members of staff who feel forced to resign



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# Developing a menopause policy

Having a menopause policy is a great way to make sure you're including an inclusive and supportive working environment in the office and remotely.

Minor adjustments to somebody's working environment can make a huge difference. Your menopause policy should set out the support you offer people before, during and after the menopause. It should reassure people suffering with menopausal symptoms that they can ask, without embarrassment, for adjustments to ease them. It should make sure they can work in a safe environment and have open discussions, so they feel part of an inclusive work culture.

## What could you include in your policy?

**Flexible working** - this is key for anyone transitioning through the menopause. One in three people will consider reducing their hours or leaving work because of their menopause symptoms, so flexible working options could help navigate this. These options



**Remote work options** - in addition to flexible hours, consider the option for remote work, which can provide a more comfortable environment for those experiencing severe symptoms.

**General support** - you should aim to create an open, understanding working environment. Encourage employees to tell their line manager if they're experiencing menopausal symptoms. This means they'll be able to get their symptoms treated, take sickness leave without fearing discrimination, and you can offer the support they need.

**Education** - educate managers about menopause symptoms, and make sure employees can access specialist menopause support if they need it. Schedule regular educational sessions for all employees, to foster a more inclusive understanding of menopause.

**Policies** - review your health and wellbeing policies and practices regularly. You should listen to and work with employees to support them and drive change concerning the menopause.

**Gender sensitive risk assessments** - do these to consider the specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause and to be sure that their working environment won't make their symptoms worse. Risk assessments will also help you identify any adjustments you might need to make.



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**Workplace temperature and ventilation.** You could give desk fans to people experiencing hot flushes. If that's not possible, offer them a desk closer to a window they can open, or away from direct sources of heat like radiators.

**Access to adequate toilet and washing facilities and drinking water** - this will help people feel more comfortable.

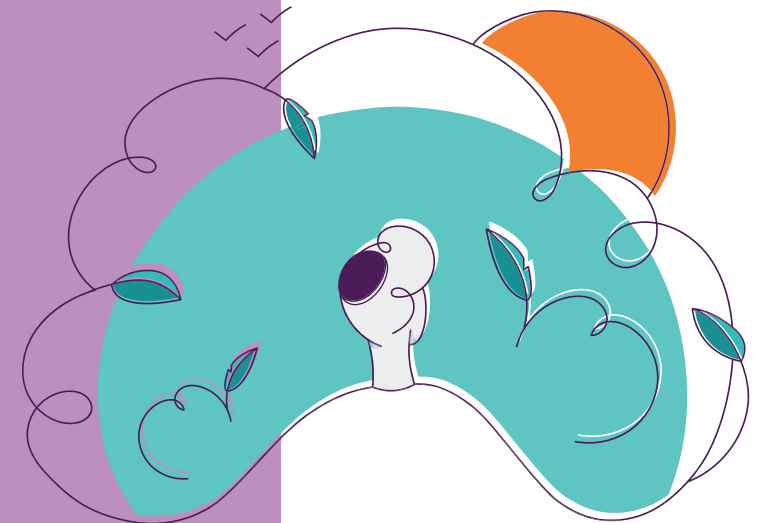
**Clothing** - be flexible over uniforms and dress codes, in case they make symptoms like hot flushes and sweating worse. If you have uniforms, you should have spares available in case anybody needs them.

**Exercise and wellness programs** - offer programs or subsidies for activities such as yoga, pilates, coaching or other exercises that can help alleviate menopause symptoms.

## Who should be responsible?

As an employee you should:

- Educate yourself about the menopause and understand the terms of your organisation's policy
- Understand what information is available and take advice and guidance when you need it
- Be as open and honest as possible with your line manager,



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- Agree to keep your line manager informed so they can be sure they're offering the right support
- Speak to a trusted colleague or HR if your line manager isn't supportive or you don't feel you can speak to them

If you're a line manager you should:

- Do any menopause awareness training on offer
- Be aware of the support your organisation offers and the terms of the policy
- Make all members of your team aware of policies and where to find information and support
- Listen to each employee's individual needs and be open to discussions around the menopause, keeping things confidential when they need to be
- Have regular check-ins to review any support and make any changes to an employee's working environment or patterns needed, from both your organisation's and the employee's perspectives



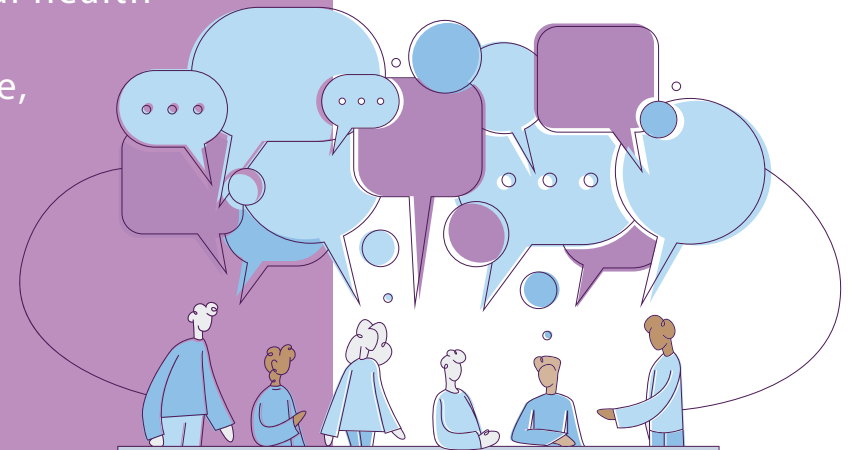
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# Further actions

- It's important to have conversations about the menopause that all employees are engaged in, as this helps break the topic's taboo. It's crucial for everyone to understand it, even if they won't go through the menopause, as they'll have colleagues and team members who will.
- You could appoint a 'menopause champion' - someone who's happy to share their own experiences and help drive new initiatives to support the menopause policy.
- You could create a dedicated page on the company intranet with all available resources, including internal support options and external links to helpful organisations.

## Signposting and more reading

- [Why menopause matters for business](#) talk by Peppy, a digital health platform
- [Menopause Matters](#) gives information about the menopause, symptoms and treatment options
- [Daisy Network](#) supports people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency
- The [Menopause Cafe](#) runs events where people come



- Henpicked is an online community that gives women a place to have their say, promotes healthy debate and brings about positive debate. They also have lunch and learn videos with industry-wide experts
- Meg Menopause is an honest and frank look at all things menopause
- The CIPD's practical guide for managers gives guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach conversations about it appropriately and sensitively



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