

# Health Promotion / Wellness / Psychosocial

## Menopause in the Workplace

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## What is menopause?

Menopause is the term used to mark the end of a person's menstrual cycles. It is determined after the person has gone 12 months without a menstrual period. Menopause often occurs when a person is in their 40s or 50s, with the average age being around 51.

The 3 stages of menopause include:

- perimenopause
- menopause
- post menopause

Perimenopause means "around menopause". It is also called menopausal transition. These terms refer to the body's natural transition to menopause. Individuals may start perimenopause at different ages. It is often noticed as menstrual irregularity, sometime in a person's 40s, but it can occur earlier or later.

The level of estrogen in the body rises and falls unevenly during perimenopause. Menstrual cycles may lengthen or shorten. Not all people will show the same signs or symptoms.

Symptoms of menopause and perimenopause include:

- Irregular periods
- Hot flashes, chills, night sweats
- Sleep issues
- Mood changes
- Bladder issues

- Decreasing fertility
  - Vaginal issues and changes in sexual function
  - Loss of bone
  - Increase in aches or joint pain
  - Changes in cholesterol levels
  - Weight gain and slowed metabolism
  - Thinning hair and dry skin
  - Loss of breast fullness
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## Should menopause be an occupational concern?

Most often, menopause has little or no impact on an employee's ability to do their job and employers may not know the employee is experiencing these changes. However, for others, there may be an impact on health, performance, and attendance.

Symptoms of menopause may be cognitive, physical, and psychological (for example hot flashes, muscle aches, poor concentration, anxiety, and headaches). As such, effects in the workplace may include fatigue, lower energy, lower performance, or poor mental health.

Changes to the body as a result of menopause that may impact the workplace include:

- Cardiovascular changes - may impact the ability to do heavy physical tasks, adjust to hot and cold temperatures, etc.
  - Lower bone density – may result in fractures, especially to the spine, hips, and wrists
  - Urinary incontinence – the need to urinate more frequently or unexpectedly will influence how access to toilet facilities is provided. Urinary stress incontinence may also occur, for example, when a person is lifting a load
  - Hot flashes – need to dress in layers, or have access to cool water or a cooler space
  - Sleep issues – may include the need for flexible work hours, or more recovery time between shifts or extended workdays
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## How can an organization help address issues associated with menopause?

Employers and employees should work together to address concerns around menopause respectfully.

Organizations may:

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- Educate and train all employees to speak openly about menopause without stigma (to self or others), understand how menopause affects the individual's physical and mental health, how address it sensitively and fairly, etc.
- Provide awareness and education about menopause
- Create or review policies for diversity and inclusion, for example on sex and gender reassignment. Menopause may occur in persons who are trans, non-binary, or intersex
- Consider menopause when developing policies regarding absences, sick leave, or flexible work
- Provide [flexible working hours](#), such as to allow time off to attend medical appointments
- Include the impact of medications and therapies (prescribed, or over the counter) in an [impairment](#) in the workplace policy
- Include the impact of [fatigue](#) on working hours, [shiftwork](#) or [extended workday](#) arrangements, etc.
- Develop or review safe work procedures to include appropriate [lifting](#) techniques, and methods to increase control over posture and balance
- Allow some control over the temperature and ventilation of the work area, where possible
- When uniforms are required, allow for variation in material and fit to allow for dressing in layers or to increase comfort
- Provide regular access to toilet facilities
- Provide access to a cool drinking water, a quiet room, or rest area, as needed
- Promote opportunities for [active living](#), [healthy eating](#), [stress](#) management, and positive [mental health](#)
- Provide access to support programs, such as [employee assistance programs](#), where available

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## What can individuals do to help?

Whether you are experiencing menopause symptoms or if you are working with someone who is, remember:

- Menopause is a natural and temporary stage of life. Not everyone experiences the same symptoms in the same way
- Symptoms such as feeling irritable, trouble concentrating, and lack of memory are temporary

- To talk to your manager or human resources about services and supports that may be available
- When speaking to your manager, be prepared, indicate that you would like to speak about a personal matter, speak about how your symptoms are affecting you physically and mentally, offer suggestions that may help, and agree on next steps.
- To layer clothing and ask if you can use a small fan at your workstation, if possible
- To include healthy habits in your routine, such as healthy eating, active living, and stress management
- To avoid triggers, such as hot drinks or hot food, and reduce intake of alcohol and caffeine (which can make symptoms worse)

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