

Talking with staff

To make sure the right support is available, employers and line managers should invite staff to talk with them privately about how the menopause is affecting them at work and what could help.

Employers should make sure they get training for their managers on talking about the menopause so they:

- know how to have conversations with all staff about the menopause
- know what support is available to anyone going through the menopause
- understand their role when it comes to offering support to staff
- understand any organisational policies related to the menopause
- know how the menopause relates to the law and discrimination
- know that the menopause can affect everyone differently and that the support needed can vary from person to person

Managers should also be encouraged to talk about the menopause with all staff alongside other equality and diversity and health and wellbeing topics to normalise the topic.

Organising conversations with staff

Individual conversations with staff affected by the menopause should always be confidential and held in private where both the manager and staff member are comfortable and will not be disturbed.

The manager should:

- allow the staff member to decide how much information they wish to disclose in the meeting
- ask general questions, but let the staff member lead the conversation
- not ask them if they want to talk about the menopause, or suggest what symptoms they might be experiencing
- not make any assumptions about the person's symptoms and should consider any needs they have

Managers should respect the person's wishes for privacy and not disclose any information to other colleagues without their permission.

If someone wants information about their menopause symptoms to be shared, the manager should let them decide:

- what they want and do not want their colleagues to know
- who will be told and who will do the telling

It might be helpful to keep a written record of what has been agreed about confidentiality and the sharing of information.

Why people might not talk about their symptoms

People might not talk about their menopause symptoms at work because they:

- feel it's a private or personal matter
- feel their symptoms might be embarrassing to share with others

- do not know their line manager well enough
- are not sure if their line manager will be sympathetic
- feel they will not be taken seriously
- are worried about confidentiality
- think they will be seen to be less able to do their job
- are worried that job security or promotion opportunities might be taken away
- are worried about outing themselves as transgender, non-binary or someone with variations in sex characteristics (VSC)

Employers should also listen to people's experiences and remember that the menopause may affect different people in different ways throughout their lives.

Giving staff the option to talk with someone else

If staff affected by the menopause want to, employers should give them the option of talking with someone other than their manager. This would help staff who might not be comfortable with approaching their line manager first to talk about how the menopause is affecting them.

The employer should make sure this person has all the necessary knowledge and training to deal with conversations about the menopause. They could be, for example a:

- member of HR
- trade union representative (if the person is a trade union member)
- counsellor from the organisation's employee assistance programme (EAP)
- menopause or wellbeing champion

Managers should be involved in agreeing any changes, even if the person has an initial conversation with someone else.

Employees who are transgender, non-binary or who have variations in sex characteristics

It might not always be obvious who is experiencing menopause symptoms. It's important for employers to remember that the menopause affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle.

This can include some people who:

- are transgender
- have variations in sex characteristics (VSC) – some people might use the terms intersex or differences in sex development (DSD)
- are non-binary – someone who's non-binary does not see themselves as exclusively a man or a woman

Employers should support everyone equally and keep conversations confidential and private. An employee might talk about being transgender, non-binary or having variations in sex characteristics. They might not want this to be more widely known.

It might also be a criminal offence to disclose information about a person who has a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). This is a document that changes a person's sex for legal purposes.

Employers should consider that:

- not everyone has hormone treatment – but those who do can experience menopause symptoms when stopping or restarting treatment

- transgender men might experience menopause symptoms if their ovaries remain and they're not given hormone therapy
- transgender women and women with variations in sex characteristics might experience menopause symptoms if their hormone treatment is interrupted or hormone levels change

Employers should also consider that women with variations in sex characteristics and transgender men might:

- experience surgical menopause if their ovaries are removed
- not experience menopause symptoms with hormone treatment, but they may experience hormonal disruption

Agreeing to changes with staff

It might be agreed that the employer can make a change at work to help someone going through the menopause. If the effects of the symptoms cause a disability, the employer must make [reasonable adjustments](#).

Changes an employer could make to help support someone include:

- being flexible where possible over start and finish times to help them manage their symptoms
- allowing them to take breaks when needed
- providing a private area where they can rest to help manage their symptoms
- allowing them to work from home when practical
- allowing them time off if they cannot carry on working that day
- changing certain duties in their role
- where appropriate, letting the person have control over their working environment, for example having a desk next to a window that opens or providing them with a fan

If someone believes a longer term change to their job would help them with their menopause symptoms they could make a [flexible working request](#).

Employers should make sure managers are objective and knowledgeable in discussing, considering and agreeing any changes with staff.

Changes should be agreed in writing and managers should have follow-up conversations with staff to make sure the changes are working for both them and the employer.

The frequency of follow-up conversations might differ from person to person, depending on how their symptoms and needs change. It's important to remember that the changes agreed at work might need to be reviewed as the person goes through the different stages of the menopause.

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