

# Vitality

An EFAP Article for Human Resource and Occupational Health Professionals, Program Administrators, Supervisors, and Key Personnel



## Menopause and the Workplace: A guide for employers

*While we use the term “woman” in this article, we recognize that menopause is a life stage that can be experienced by transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people too.*

Women spend up to half their lives in one of the three phases of menopause (perimenopause, menopause and postmenopause). Symptoms that accompany menopause can be severe enough that they interfere with daily life, so much so that 10% of women leave their careers due to menopause. Employers can take steps to support women by beginning a dialogue, developing policies, providing accommodations, and offering Employee Assistance Programs.

Women in their 40s and 50s are at the height of their careers. With over 5 million women aged 40 and above in the workforce, those between 45-55 are the fastest-growing demographic among working women. This age group represents an increasingly influential segment, shaping industries and workplaces nationwide. This is also the age that most women enter the menopausal phase of their life. Menopause isn't only experienced by cisgender women. The ovaries are the main source of estrogen in the body, so people with this anatomy will likely go through

some kind of menopause process — including gender non-conforming, non-binary, and transgender individuals — meaning they may also experience menopause symptoms.

Menopause symptoms can vary from mild to severe and may be temporary or long lasting. Menopause symptoms are experienced in 90% of women and may include abnormal menstrual bleeding (heavy and/or irregular periods, bleeding in between periods), hot flashes and night sweats, sleep disturbance or insomnia, bladder control issues, brain fog or other cognitive changes, joint pain and muscle aches, and a lack of energy. One third of women report that their menopause symptoms negatively impact their performance at work with 25% of women hiding their symptoms. The lack of information that women receive about menopause can leave women feeling alone and confused, and many struggle, trying to cope with or hide symptoms.

## What can organizations do to support menopausal women?

A recent study has estimated that the economic impact of unmanaged menopause symptoms costs the economy \$3.5 billion per year. That's \$237 million in lost productivity, 540,000 lost days of work and \$3.3 billion in lost income due to loss of worked hours or leaving the workforce altogether.

But despite its impact, menopause often goes unaddressed in the workplace. Organizations have an opportunity to create menopause inclusive workplaces. Proactive and empathetic policies can make a substantial difference in both employee well-being and organizational success. The first step an organization can take is to recognize that there are women in the workplace that are in the prime of their careers but may also be suffering in silence.

**Listen to employees and learn about their needs.** Create space for employees to join group conversations about their experiences and provide surveys to the entire workforce to gain information about employee's knowledge and needs.

**Awareness.** Creating an inclusive workplace begins with awareness. Educating managers, supervisors, and employees on menopause allows for open dialogue, helping to normalize menopause, reduce stigma, and dispel stereotypes and negative images associated with menopause and ageism. Consider holding menopause education or aging in the workplace sessions and awareness events as part of your workplace wellness programs. Use information gained from surveys (above) to guide session topics.

**Include men in the conversation.** While women have concerns about being perceived as weak or past their prime, it's important that men are included in the conversation. Men often have little to no awareness about what their women counterparts are experiencing. Including men in the conversation can improve their understanding and compassion for what many women experience. Speaking about mid-life changes that affect both women and men can improve and create a supportive workplace.

**Provide access to information/create a knowledge hub.** Provide information to employees on your intranet, in break rooms, and other areas where information is posted or shared through internal social channels. Share links to reliable resources such as the [Menopause Foundation of Canada](#), [The Canadian Menopause Society](#), [The Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists of Canada](#), [The Menopause Society](#), and the [International Menopause Society](#). Share culturally relevant information.

**Workplace policies and accommodations.** Unsupported women can drive up employer healthcare costs and cause millions in missed workdays. Reduced productivity and early retirement are other costs that organizations face. However, many organizations are revising existing policies to incorporate menopause. Such accommodations may include: flexible hours, extra breaks, updating attendance

management policies, remote work options, or adjustment of responsibilities when symptoms are particularly challenging. Other adjustments may include private rest areas, temperature-regulated spaces, flexible break times or splitting breaks, and easy access to washrooms with large enough garbage containers for disposal of period products. Changes to uniforms or dress codes, such as allowing lighter, breathable fabrics may further alleviate discomfort associated with hot flushes.

**Employee Assistance Programs.** Women in menopause who may feel they can't talk to their manager or Human Resources teams can access their confidential Employee Assistance Program for services. Studies have shown that 19-36% of women may experience depression during menopause transition, so timely access to mental health care with providers knowledgeable on menopause is important.

**Employee Benefits.** Review and understand your benefit provider's options. Ensure coverage for Health Canada approved menopause therapies used to treat symptoms in perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause. Review coverage for paramedical, health spending accounts, and personal spending accounts. Pelvic floor physiotherapy, mental health support, nutritional counselling, and alternative therapies such as osteopathy, acupuncture, physiotherapy, massage therapy, and chiropractic care can all help with symptoms and help improve overall physical and mental health.



### What is the benefit for organizations?

Organizations often make investments in their employees and not doing anything can be costly. Companies stand to lose productivity, valuable team members and the corresponding loss of experience and knowledge, and will bear the cost of replacing highly experienced individuals who leave the workplace. Improving menopause awareness allows:

- those that need support to be more comfortable asking for it
- workplace culture improves
- fewer missed workdays
- talent is retained
- intergenerational workforce supports mentorship, knowledge transfer and retention, and multiple perspectives to problem solving.

### Building a Supportive Future

Creating a menopause-inclusive workplace is more than a wellness initiative. It's an investment in people and in long-term organizational

health. Employers who recognize menopause as a natural part of the life course and respond with compassion and practical support will not only retain skilled professionals but also cultivate a culture of trust, inclusivity, and respect that benefits everyone.

For more information or learn about additional services to support health and wellness initiatives in your organization, contact your Account Manager, email us at [wellnessrequest@homewoodhealth.com](mailto:wellnessrequest@homewoodhealth.com), or call our Client Services Centre at 1-800-663-1142 (EN) or 1-866-398-9509 (FR) or TTY 1-888-384-1152.

### References:

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