

How to become a menopause-friendly workplace

*Tips, tools and templates
for your organisation*



Prevention AUSTRALIA

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Menopause and the workplace

What is menopause?

Menopause refers to the last menstrual period and is a natural part of ageing. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 with a global average of 51 years.^{1,2} Early menopause (between 40 and 45 or even earlier) can happen if ovaries cease to function naturally, if ovaries are surgically removed or as a result of cancer treatment.

Approximately 80% of women experience menopausal symptoms ranging from mild to debilitating.¹ They may include hot flushes, night sweats, sleeping difficulties, fatigue, aches and pains, mood changes, memory and concentration problems, vaginal dryness, loss of libido and more.

Perimenopause is the stage leading up to menopause. It usually starts in your 40s and lasts an average of four to six years (although it can range from one to 10 years).³ During perimenopause, women may have irregular periods and start to experience some of the symptoms of menopause.

A woman is considered **postmenopausal** when she hasn't had a period in 12 months.¹

Why is menopause a workplace issue?

Globally, there are 657 million women aged 45 to 49 and almost half (47%) are employed.² As the number of women experiencing menopause in the workforce increases, organisations must take their needs into account.

Menopause is an important gender- and age-equality issue, and employers should include menopausal health in workplace policies to foster an inclusive and supportive culture.²

A menopause-friendly workplace can improve productivity and performance, reduce absenteeism and enhance employee retention. This can translate into significant financial benefits for both organisations and their staff.⁴

Retaining women in employment during their menopausal years can also be a powerful tool for organisations wishing to secure a workforce with valuable skills and talent. By shifting their mindset on the value postmenopausal women hold, they can tap into a highly experienced and driven segment of the labour force.⁴

In many countries, employers must comply with menopause-relevant legislation.⁴

How this resource will help

Our guide will give you all the tools, strategies and templates you need to make your workplace menopause-friendly. Although we use the term "women" throughout, trans men, gender diverse people and intersex people may also experience menopause. The content of this document is intended to support anyone experiencing menopause regardless of their sex or gender.

How menopause-friendly is your organisation?

This health check of your organisation's existing policies will help you identify practices that are already menopause-friendly, others that may require minor tweaks to become menopause-friendly, and areas for improvement where new policies may need to be implemented.

	Measure/ action in place	Minor changes required	Significant changes required
CULTURE			
Photos of menopausal-age women included in policy materials			
Menopause information available through organisational resources			
Recognition days (e.g. World Menopause Day) used for awareness			
Age management policies consider reproductive/life stage changes			
Gendered ageism addressed in inclusion policies			

FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICIES

No extended periods without a planned non-working day (for shiftworkers)			
Flexible start and finish times			
Flexible distribution of hours across the working week			
Full-time to part-time working possible			
Working from home arrangements available to menopausal women			

PHYSICAL WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

Fixed positions available as required (not hotdesking)			
Employees can change workspaces as required			
Relaxation rooms available on site			

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Menopause included in broader wellbeing initiatives			
Menopause-friendly uniforms (breathable, layered)			
Mental health campaigns include life stage conversations			
Workstation assessors aware of symptoms			
Quick access to desk and mobile fans			
Localised temperature control considered			

MEETING POLICY

Temperature-controlled meeting rooms			
Meetings kept to time for comfort/toilet breaks			
Chairs mention toilets and water stations at start			
Teleconferencing available for those experiencing symptoms			

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR contact for menopause-related questions			
Menopause eligible for reasonable adjustments			
Clear disclosure procedures			
Induction includes life stage health support			
EAP providers aware of symptoms			
Inclusion policies updated to cover menopause			
Training includes age-related health awareness			
Absence systems allow menopause to be recorded			
Leave requests include menopause-related options			

Tools and strategies

There are many ways organisations can support people going through menopause. Because symptoms can vary widely, a flexible and person-centred approach is key.

To ensure your menopause support strategy is successful, you should have a clear understanding of its focus, scope and intended outcomes, as well as how and when it will be evaluated. [This checklist](#) can help you define your strategy.

Here are four key ways to make your workplace menopause-friendly and help your employees feel supported.

Staff awareness and training

Raising awareness of the physical, mental and emotional effects of menopause can help foster an inclusive work environment where people experiencing menopause feel comfortable seeking support.

Here are some ways to accomplish this:

- Train all staff on menopause, its symptoms and its workplace implications. [This resource](#) contains helpful tips.
- Provide additional training to supervisors and managers on how to sensitively support menopausal team members. Download free “menopause-friendly managers” resources [here](#).
- Include evidence-based and up-to-date information on menopause in your organisation’s health and wellbeing resources.
- Display these free [menopause support posters](#) throughout the workplace.
- Promote awareness campaigns such as World Menopause Day on 18 October via email, intranet and posters.
- Provide menopausal team members with access to EAP services and peer support groups.

Messaging and communication

Your internal and external communications provide valuable opportunities to showcase your organisation’s commitment to supporting staff through menopause. Here are three easy ways to do so:

- Include images of midlife women at all levels of the organisation, including senior management.
- Express your commitment to being a menopause-friendly workplace and outline the steps you’ve taken to achieve this goal.
- Obtain a Menopause Friendly Accreditation (in [Australia](#), [the UK](#) and [the US](#)) and proudly display your badge on your website, social media and communications.

Adjustments to the work environment

Providing easy-to-access tools and implementing changes to the work environment can help make your workplace more comfortable for people experiencing menopausal symptoms and boost their productivity.

Examples include:

- Giving staff easy access to cold drinking water and restrooms
- Providing desk fans
- Allowing uniform alterations and breathable fabrics
- Providing quiet spaces to work or noise-cancelling headphones

Find out more about [reasonable adjustment practices](#).

Flexible work arrangements

Flexible working options are crucial for menopausal employees and these arrangements must be normalised within your organisation. Staff can't be penalised or discriminated against for using them.

Here are some examples:

- Flexible start and finishing times
- Additional breaks or flexible break times
- The option to work from home, especially on hot days
- Allowing workspaces and meetings to be relocated to areas where temperatures can be locally controlled
- Allowing cameras to be off during video calls
- Reduced work hours or time off work when needed
- The option to select "menopause-related" as a reason for work absences
- [Providing support](#) to employees returning to work after a menopause-related absence
- Ensuring menopausal employees have access to EAP support and counselling

Free menopause resources

Need more information and tools? Visit the [Menopause at Work website](#) and download their free, easy-to-use menopause resources.

[Thriving in menopause podcast series](#)

[How to prepare for menopause: A complete guide](#)

[Balancing nutrition through menopause](#)

[Menopause and anxiety: Is there a link?](#)

Menopause policy template

The following template is based on the one [created by Balance](#), the menopause support app. You can edit it to reflect your organisation's policy and menopause support strategies.

Menopause Policy and Guidance

1. Introduction

1.1 _____ ("the Company") is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone that works here.

1.2 Most individuals experience symptoms during perimenopause and menopause due to changes in hormone levels. With the right support and medical treatment for their symptoms, their experience at work will improve.

1.3 Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden'. We want everyone to understand what menopause and perimenopause are and to be able to talk about them openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women, it will affect trans men and some non-binary and intersex people, and all men will be affected by it indirectly.

1.4 Research shows that the majority of individuals affected are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for support or adjustments that they may need.

1.5 This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to individuals to help them manage perimenopause and menopause symptoms at work. It is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

2. Aims

2.1 The aims of this policy are to:

2.1.1 Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about perimenopause and menopause.

2.1.2 Ensure everyone understands what perimenopause and menopause are, can confidently have open and supportive conversations and are clear on the Company's policy and practices supported by the HR department.

2.1.3 Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of perimenopause and menopause, and how they can support individuals at work.

2.1.4 Ensure that anyone suffering with symptoms feels confident to raise the issue and ask for support and any adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles.

2.1.5 Reduce absenteeism due to perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms.

2.1.6 Assure people going through perimenopause and menopause that the Company _____ is a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all staff at every level.

4. Definitions

4.1 Menopause is when someone stops having periods. It occurs when the ovaries stop producing eggs and as a result, levels of hormones called oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone fall.

There are four key stages:

Pre-menopause: the time in life before any menopausal symptoms occur.

Perimenopause: when menopausal symptoms occur due to hormone changes, but periods still happen (even if irregular).

Menopause: when there has been no period for 12 consecutive months.

Postmenopause: the time in life after 12 months with no periods.

The average age for someone to reach menopause is 51, but hormonal changes in perimenopause mean that many experience symptoms for around 10 years prior to this. One in 100 women enter the menopause under 45 years and one in 1000 women before 40 years.

5. Symptoms of menopause

5.1 Over 80% of women, as well as some trans men, non-binary people and intersex people, experience symptoms due to changes in hormone levels. 25% of these experience symptoms which could be classed as severe and have a significant impact on their daily life.

5.2 There are many symptoms including, but not exclusively, anxiety, brain fog, fatigue, hot flushes, trouble sleeping, poor concentration, headaches or migraines. Heavy periods, aching muscles and joints, and loss of confidence and self-esteem can also occur.

5.3 Reduced levels of oestrogen last forever. This is not a phase that people go through and 'come out the other side'. Without replacing hormones, ongoing symptoms can occur for the rest of someone's life. Lack of oestrogen has a further effect on future health as it is linked with loss of bone density (leading to osteoporosis), heart disease, diabetes and dementia.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Staff

6.1.1 All staff are responsible for:

- taking personal responsibility to look after their own health
- being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR
- if a staff member is unable to speak to their line manager, or their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to a member of the HR Department
- contributing to a respectful and productive working environment
- being willing to help and support their colleagues
- understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

6.2 Line managers

6.2.1 All line managers should:

- familiarise themselves with the menopause policy and guidance
- be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
- follow any menopause related guidance provided by the Company and HR, signposting and reviewing together with HR, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, or adjustments required
- record adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented
- respect the worker's right to privacy and confidentiality, ensure all information shared with colleagues, line managers and HR regarding experiences of staff members is treated as confidential
- ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to

6.3 HR

6.3.1 HR will:

- offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this policy and guidance
- have open discussions with colleagues about menopause, and offer guidance, support or adjustments in an attempt where possible to support the individual's requirements
- respect the worker's right to privacy and confidentiality, ensuring all information shared with colleagues, line managers and HR regarding experiences of staff members is treated as confidential
- update the policy and effectiveness of this policy when required
- attend appropriate training if required

References and further resources

References

- ¹ Australasian Menopause Society. (2022, May). What is menopause? Australasian Menopause Society. <https://www.menopause.org.au/hp/information-sheets/what-is-menopause>
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- ⁴ MIP. (n.d.) Why menopause at work? Why now? Menopause Information Pack for Organizations. https://www.menopauseatwork.org/files/ugd/982b52_22e637b20629407e90381f9be2ae8410.pdf

Further resources

Australasian Menopause Society Fact Sheets (Australia and NZ)

Information sheets covering symptoms, treatment options, early menopause and myth-busting surrounding menopause.

Canadian Menopause Society

Information about menopause, advice on treatments and lifestyle-orientated considerations.

North American Menopause Society (USA)

Includes a blog written by medics, a video series discussing various aspects of menopause and information about meno app – a free app to use to facilitate discussion about the menopause with clinicians.

British Menopause Society (UK)

This series of fact sheets produced for clinicians gives you all the information you need to understand and make informed decisions about menopause.

International Menopause Society (Europe)

Comprehensive guide to menopause, including a glossary and patient information leaflets published yearly on World Menopause Day.