

Menopause in the workplace
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Menopause not only affects women's personal lives, but it can affect a woman's professional life as well. Women make up close to half of the Canadian workforce. Over the last few decades, the age of retirement has increased, which also increases the chance that women will experience menopause while at work. Six out of 10 menopausal women report that their symptoms negatively impact their ability to work.

Menopausal symptoms at work can lead to embarrassment and decreased self-confidence, but also sometimes lead to a complete inability to perform work duties. For example, insomnia, depression and memory issues could make concentrating on a task or interacting with customers and co-workers more challenging. Ideally, women employees with menopause would be supported the same way as any employee with an ongoing health condition, such as people who are pregnant or who have hurt their back.

Interestingly, the United Kingdom is taking the lead in this area. Over the last year, several members of parliament in Great Britain have called for more progressive government policy specific to menopause. In fact, the Labour party included an intention to implement work regulations regarding menopause in its campaign platform. Large companies, including Channel 4, have also made the effort to develop internal policies accounting for the menopause transition. By addressing the issues that menopause causes at work, companies benefit by improving team morale and loyalty, retaining valuable skills and talent, as well as reducing sick leave. For example, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has some great tips for managers and human resources on how to help menopausal employees. These include:

- Creating a supportive environment where women will feel safe opening up about their challenges. Promoting awareness and spreading reliable information can help to achieve this.
- Individualizing adjustments. Do not assume all employees' experiences with menopause are the same or are unchanged over time. Examples of possible accommodations are:
 - Adjusting office temperature and ventilation or providing a fan
 - Offering cool drinking water
 - Providing easy access washing facilities and sanitary products
 - Considering flexible work times
 - Adapting uniforms to improve comfort

Simple changes can ensure menopausal women perform at their best and contribute to their full potential.

RESOURCES

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (cipd.co.uk)

https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/menopause-guide-for-people-managers_tcm18-55548.pdf

<https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/long-reads/menopause-work-women-feminism-hrt-oestrogen-treatment-a9194781.html>