

HOW TO DISCUSS MENOPAUSE WITH YOUR WORKPLACE

Menopausal symptoms often occur at the peak of your career.

Everyone should feel that they can initiate a conversation with their manager, especially when they need guidance and advice.

You may feel uncomfortable talking to your manager about how menopause is affecting you at work; however, your manager should be committed to supporting you at work so you can reach your potential.

Does your company have a policy to reflect menopause? Many companies in Australia have not included menopause in their policies, so the first step would be to check your organisation's intranet and, if there is nothing there, speak to your Human Resources (HR) department.

Preparing for your meeting: Keep a diary of your symptoms, such as hot flushes, disturbed sleep, and low mood. Establish how they are affecting you at work. Write down your ideas on adjustments that could be made to help alleviate symptoms. Options include flexible working arrangements, working from home, ways to cool the office environment, providing regular breaks, providing access to cold water, and, if you wear a uniform or scrubs in a hospital theatre, asking for a cool, breathable fabric and a UV umbrella to assist with keeping you cool if you work outdoors.

These options could be agreed upon for a short period of time while you work with your doctor to alleviate your menopausal symptoms.

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Meeting with your manager:

At the start of the meeting, agree about whether you want the conversation to be kept confidential or if you're happy to discuss it with colleagues. It is recommended that you speak openly and be transparent about your symptoms and how they are affecting your work.

It is good to be constructive by offering solutions to what you think could be helpful. If your manager is not showing empathy or understanding regarding how you feel, you may wish to consider scheduling a meeting with HR. At the end of the meeting, put a time in the diary to meet again in order to monitor progress and, if needed, reduce or make further adjustments.

NO WOMAN SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND!

You are not alone, and, chances are, there are others at work who have experienced or are experiencing menopausal symptoms. About 83% of working women in Australia say that menopause has a negative impact on their work.

Recognising the inevitability of menopause and creating an inclusive environment for staff members of all ages not only improves an organisation's performance but also creates a positive environment in which to work.