

HOW TO DISCUSS MENOPAUSE WITH YOUR WORKPLACE

Menopausal symptoms often occur at the peak of your career.

Menopause is a natural phase of life that can bring significant physical, emotional and cognitive changes. These changes can sometimes impact your work life, making it important to have open and supportive conversations with your employer. Everyone should feel comfortable initiating conversations with their manager, especially when seeking guidance and support.

While discussing how menopause affects your work might feel uncomfortable, it's important to remember that your manager plays a key role in ensuring you have the support you need to continue thriving in your position.

Checking your company's policies:

Does your company have a policy to reflect menopause or a guidance document addressing menopause-related concerns?

If your company has a policy to reflect menopause or a guidance document, it can be a valuable resource. However, many companies in Australia have yet to include menopause in their policies. The first step is to check your organisation's intranet, and if you find that menopause is not addressed, reach out to your Human Resources (HR) department to explore what support is available.

Preparing for your meeting:

Keep a diary of your symptoms, such as disturbed sleep, hot flushes 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.

Potential options include flexible working hours, adjusted start and finish times, the ability to work from home, desktop or mobile fans, noise-reducing headphones, a height-adjustable desk, regular breaks, access to a break room, access to cold water, toilet facilities and sanitary products, and if a uniform is required, modifications like breathable fabric or a UV umbrella to assist with keeping you cool if you work outdoors.

Additionally, access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or Occupational Health Support can provide valuable practical guidance on reasonable adjustments during this transition. Some workplaces also run a menopause working group or café, a good option if you would find it helpful to connect with others going through a similar experience. Menopause Alliance Australia (menopausealliance.au) is another resource you or your workplace can turn to for information and support.

Keep in mind that not all workplaces may be able to implement every adjustment due to their specific office or external environments, or they may already have some measures in place. These options could be agreed upon for a short period of time, while you work with your doctor to alleviate your menopausal symptoms.

Schedule a private meeting:

Allow time to discuss your symptoms and ideas with your manager in a private setting.

Meeting with your manager:

Agree at the start of the meeting 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.

Keep records of your conversations and any agreed-upon adjustments. This documentation can be valuable if you need to revisit the discussion. At the end of the meeting, put a time in the diary to meet again in order to monitor progress and adjust, reduce or add further support as needed.

NO WOMAN SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND!

You are not alone. Chances are there are others at work who have experienced or are experiencing menopausal symptoms. By starting a conversation and seeking support, you can help foster a more understanding, supportive and inclusive workplace where everyone feels comfortable discussing their health and wellbeing.

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.