Menopause for thought: managing the change at work

World Menopause day 2021

IOSH Webinar 18 October 2021
What is The Menopause?

- Normal physiological transition in females
- Defined as end of female reproductive function$^{(1,2)}$
- Between ages of 44 & 55 yrs$^{(3)}$ - average 51$^{(4)}$
- *early onset menopause (1 in 100)* as Chemical-, pharmacological- or surgery induced menopause$^{(4)}$
- Preceded by perimenopause or menopausal transition lasting 2 to 10 yrs$^{(2)}$
Menopause symptoms and statistics\(^{(1,2,4)}\)

88% of women are symptomatic\(^{(1)}\)

25% of women will have severe symptoms\(^{(3,5)}\)

Symptomatic women are 8 times more likely to report issues with low workability\(^{(6)}\)

Source: https://www.devonsexualhealth.nhs.uk/new-menopause-information-pages/
Most commonly reported physical symptoms\(^{1}\):

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Sleep disturbances
- Joint pain
- Osteoporosis
- Cardiovascular disorders
Most common psychological symptoms (1)

Mood disorders
Depression
Difficulties concentrating
Memory lapses (forgetfulness)
Fatigue
Irritability and anxiety
Global relevance of menopause

- Globally ± 657 million women aged 45-59
- ± 50% work during menopausal transition (4)
- Numbers will increase (5)
- Cultural differences
- Many leave the workplace due to impact of maladapted workplaces
Current state of affairs

- Remains poorly recognised at work
- Taboo subject (5,6,7)
- Managers lack knowledge to address issues (3)
- Under researched in the workplace (2,7,8)
- OMP acknowledged insufficient knowledge of menopausal health in work context (6)
Impact on work\(^{(3,11,12)}\)

Impact quality and productivity
- Reduced ability to learn new tasks
- Difficulty paying attention to detail
- Poor memory ‘brain fog’
- Increased absence and presenteeism
- 4 million lost workdays in UK (2018)
- 2030 productivity losses could exceed $150 billion/yr
Womens experiences & work

- Negative perception of manager – labelled as weak, incompetent, unstable and depressed (7)
- Lack of support in coping with symptoms (8)
- Use annual leave/rest days to cope with symptoms
- Not confident to disclose status to managers (9)
- Fear of stigmatization and discrimination
- Do not request accommodations
- Reduce working hrs or leave employment to cope
What organisations and OSH professionals can do (4,8,9)

- Support menopausal women
- Provide age and gender-specific Health Risk Assessment
- Implement adjustments to physical environment
- Address psychosocial issues
- Provide information and training
- Train key functions i.e. line managers
- Specific policies, procedures and programs
- Competent persons to conduct HRA
- Health promotion activities earlier in life cycle
- Financial support for resources to self-monitor symptoms e.g. blood pressure monitors
Conclusion

Women represent a talented and experienced cohort of the working population, and yet most workplaces are silent on their needs during the menopause with many managers lacking adequate knowledge to address work-related issues.

We need to create menopause-friendly workplaces that achieve a much-needed level playing field for women at work allowing them to continue to achieve their full potential as members of the working community.
Resources

- NHS - https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/
- ACAS Menopause at work - https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/supporting-staff-through-the-menopause


Women’s Health Strategy

Department of Health and Social Care – Call for evidence

Department of Health & Social Care - IOSH written submission to the Women's Health Strategy: Call for Evidence

Policy in a nutshell

Department of Health & Social Care
Women’s Health Strategy: Call for Evidence

Rationale

This call for evidence形成了 the basis of a landmark government-led Women’s Health Strategy, to improve the health and wellbeing of women across England. IOSH’s response is very much focused on the two Themes around ‘Transforming women’s health in the workplace’ and ‘Understanding and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on women’s health’.

Our response

- Understanding causes and problems: In the occupational health and wellbeing of women, there are sometimes easier, effective and more targeted ways to improve the health and wellbeing of women, and avoid the long-term worries of occupational health and wellbeing for women. It is important that in all cases, the real and genuine issues are documented to ensure effective and well thought-out policy and policy making.

- On the specific topic of women’s health: IOSH advocates for increasing the visibility of women’s occupational health, understanding health and wellbeing specifically as it affects women of working age, and supporting women in the workplace. This includes work-based health and wellbeing and how they affect women’s health and wellbeing.

Key recommendations

- To integrate promotion and prevention into the workplace, to ensure that women are given the tools and resources to ensure their health and wellbeing.

- To evidence-based policy recommendations and clear guidance on women’s occupational health and wellbeing, how this is affected by the workplace and how this can be improved.

- To encourage a gender approach to the workplace, as the workplace can be designed to specifically address the health and safety needs of women and men, young women, non-binary people and older women.

How to get involved in future consultations

Visit our policy page for the latest updates and future consultations:
https://www.iosh.org.uk/womens-health-strategy
Menopause and the workplace

INQUIRY: Menopause and the workplace
IOSH response - Call for Evidence

WE’VE LAUNCHED AN INQUIRY

Menopause and the workplace
Contribute your views by 17th September

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

Policy in a nutshell
Consultation series

Inquiry: Menopause and the workplace
Women and Equalities Committee – UK Parliament

Rationale
This inquiry examines the extent of discrimination faced by menopausal people in the workplace and investigates how Government policy and workplace practices can better support those experiencing menopause.

Our response

- Our response helps building the policy and business case around the protection of employees with work cultures and menopause-friendly workplaces to avoid a much-needed level playing field for women at work.
- IOSH encourages accounting menstruation in the workplace with a more holistic view that places the spotlight on the workplace in that it is a primary factor in the working age.
- IOSH recommends effective workplace policies and practices, together with practical support to best support women and those responsible for their health and safety at work, translating them into practice.
- IOSH calls for the development of sound occupational safety and health and non-discrimination health policies, practices, and programs that are age and gender appropriate.

Key recommendations

- Ensure that existing policies and procedures in place for the physical needs of menstruating-related issues like absences from work, and medical appointments, flexible working hours, work patterns, and health and safety practices.
- Consider practices and environments within the workplace that may put the health and safety of menopausal women at risk due to pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and musculoskeletal disorders.
- Incorporate specific measures to support women with menopause and identify reasonable adjustments for the individual.
- To foster the advice to IOSH professionals based on the outcomes of occupational health risk assessments. These normally consider age-related characteristics of different age groups, including potential changes in physical capacities and physical status.
- Monitoring, awareness, training, and educational strategies that raise understanding of the menopause, associated symptoms, impact on work, and difficulties and new communication skills are needed to balance the conversation.
- Developing more inclusive and supportive workplace cultures and management styles that reduce women’s fear of the stigma associated with symptoms of or requiring adjustments as required.

How to get involved in future consultations

Find out more information or
You can request an email from
This activity can be included in
email from at
https://www.iosh.org/iqmens
https://www.iosh.org/equality
https://www.iosh.org/iqmens
https://www.iosh.org/equality

Women and Equalities Committee