

Menopause at Work Tool

Menopause is more than hot flashes. While each person's journey through menopause is unique with some people experiencing few issues, it is important for managers to be aware that there are more than **30 menopause symptoms** that can impact an employee's health and their work.

The following information highlights what menopause looks like in the workplace. The chart outlines a few of the more common symptoms someone can experience and the behaviour outcomes.

- **Struggling in silence.** Menopause is a taboo topic, leaving women feeling alone and silently trying to cope, giving their best to their work without asking for the support that could make a difference.
- **Being embarrassed.** The stigma of menopause - and the pervasive ageism that impacts women in mid-life - contributes to women feeling embarrassed about their menopause experience and working to hide symptoms or challenges they may be having in the workplace.
- **Fearing repercussions.** Attempts to discuss issues with managers are often met with confusion about what to do or not to do. Worse still, it may set in motion a negative attitude toward a menopausal woman for bringing up the issue and may affect her job or career prospects.
- **Working to overcome perceived shortcomings.** Women may feel they aren't performing at their best and will work extremely hard to overcome perceived shortcomings so they can meet their own high standards. Without reassurance and open dialogue, this can derail one's career or job progress.
- **Dismissing the impact.** Women sometimes dismiss their symptoms because menopause is a natural process. They may think they need to "tough it out", assuming things will get better. Some may be caring for aging parents and supporting children while juggling work and may chalk up their symptoms to their busy lives or workplace stress. They may not explore the impact of hormonal change or consider whether they have an underlying condition not related to menopause.

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Symptoms

What it can look like at work

Daytime sweats, hot flashes

- Turning red and rushing to the bathroom to wait out a hot flash
- Wiping perspiration
- Searching for a cool drink
- Dressing in layers that are on and off continually
- Changes in clothes
- Searching for access to fresh air

Heavy periods

- Frequent bathroom breaks; suddenly needing to leave a one-hour meeting for a bathroom break
- Bringing a large bag into the restroom because it carries period products, personal garbage disposal or a change of clothes
- Wearing all black all the time or leaving the workplace in a different outfit than the person entered with

Fatigue - feeling tired and lacking energy

- Skipping a business trip because of exhaustion
- Showing up for work tired and with lower energy
- Arriving late to work or calling in sick more often
- Not stepping up to take on extra work or to socialize with colleagues
- Turning down a promotion, afraid they do not have the energy to manage a new challenge

Anxiety

- Skipping meetings or sending someone else
- Avoiding work-related travel
- Showing a loss of confidence
- Having panic attacks
- Low mood

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Symptoms

Brain fog, memory issues or struggling to concentrate or focus

- Grasping for words in a meeting
- Forgetting a thought mid-sentence
- Taking a lot of notes and asking for follow ups for what is required
- Not remembering names
- Having to be prompted to recall key facts or actions

Joint pain

- Suddenly unable to do physical tasks that were easy to manage before

Migraines

- Increase in required down time or absence from the office

For further information, visit MenopauseFoundationCanada.ca