



Creating a supportive workplace

Providing accommodations for menopausal employees isn't just the right thing to do – it also leads to a more engaged and thriving workplace.



Women spend half their working life experiencing various stages of menopause. That's a significant amount of time to potentially be dealing with symptoms like hot flashes, brain fog, and insomnia while still succeeding at work. We've made a lot of progress with workplace equality, but the taboo and lack of understanding around menopause, and how it can affect women on the job, remains as pervasive as ever.

Consider these stats from the Menopause Foundation of Canada:

- 32% of employed women say their menopause symptoms negatively impacted their work performance.
- Almost one in four hid their symptoms at work.
- Two-thirds of women would not feel comfortable discussing their experiences with their supervisor or human resources.
- An estimated 1 in 10 women will find their symptoms so debilitating they will leave their careers.



Menopause affects employers, too

Canadian businesses lose an estimated \$237 million in productivity each year due to menopause-related challenges, including approximately 540,000 workdays missed for symptom management.

In addition, the transition to menopause usually occurs during the ages of 45 and 55 – the same period when women are most likely to advance to senior leadership roles. By opening the dialogue around menopause and its effects on individuals and business, organizations can begin to address these concerns and retain top talent.

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Supporting menopausal employees

Here are some things employers and leaders can do to create a healthier and more inclusive environment.



1. Educate employees about their health benefits

A benefit plan should work for women at all life stages, including those in menopause. Encourage employees to review their plan to understand what's available to them.

A well-rounded plan could include:

- A drug plan that covers the cost of hormone replacement therapy or medications that can help ease symptoms
- Virtual healthcare for convenient consultations and access to prescriptions
- Mental health services to support employees experiencing anxiety, depression, or mood swings
- Access to a dietician for nutrition guidance that addresses hormonal changes, bone health, and weight management concerns
- Physiotherapy for guidance on pelvic floor exercises and exercises to strengthen bones
- A health care spending or wellness account to cover additional needs



2. Embrace flexibility and new ways of working

During the pandemic, we saw how workplace flexibility greatly benefited employees, especially women. Accommodations in how and when employees work can help increase comfort levels and productivity.

- Offer work from home options. This can allow employees to feel more comfortable in their environment, with their own washroom and temperature control.
- Allow flexible work hours to support employees managing medical appointments or coping with sleep disturbances
- Provide access to cool drinking water throughout the workplace
- Encourage frequent breaks
- If employees wear uniforms, offer options that are cool or customizable
- Allow desk fans or offer workspaces with more ventilation or cooler temperatures



3. Provide training and education

Encourage a culture of communication to reduce stigma around women's health issues.

- Offer training on a variety of health and well-being topics including menopause
- Educate employees about health benefits, workplace accommodations, and resources available
- Facilitate employee resource groups to allow members to share their stories and find support
- Seek feedback from employees on what would be helpful for them
- Consider different ways employees can access information, such as webinars, newsletters, or company intranet

By implementing policies that support women throughout their careers and life stages, companies can foster a more productive, inclusive, and resilient workforce.

Clinically reviewed by Jana Crawford, MA, MSW, RSW on February 5, 2025

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