

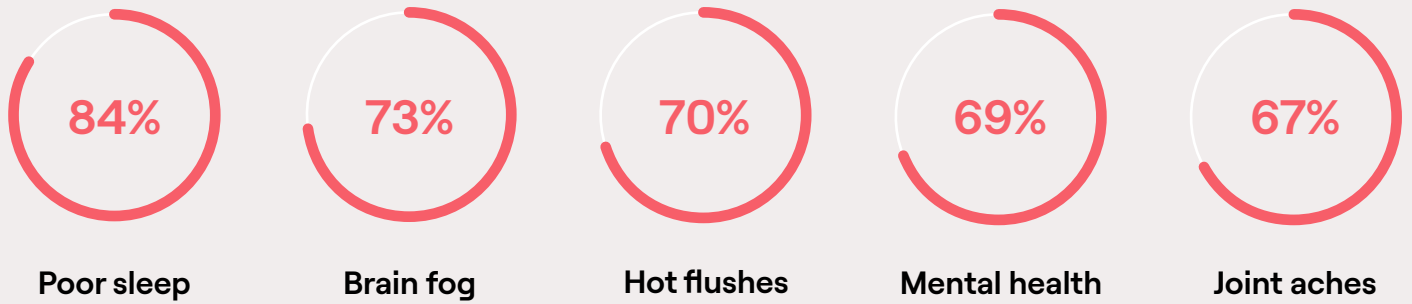
How to support women with menopause in the workplace



87% of working women want their employer to be more supportive when it comes to women's health, but despite it being a **natural stage of life** for every woman, one issue that continues to be overlooked is menopause.

There are over **30 registered menopausal symptoms**, both physical and emotional, and they can significantly impact relationships and performance at work.

A recent survey identified the most commonly reported menopausal symptoms as:



Building awareness and knowing where and how to signpost for further support is essential.

Menopause by the numbers

There are few workplaces where menopause is not being experienced by workers. It's estimated that women taking time off due to menopause symptoms costs the economy **14 million working days every year**.

Of women aged between 40 and 55 working through menopause:

- 44% said that menopausal symptoms affected their ability to do their job
- One in ten have left a job because of their symptoms
- 25% reported that they considered leaving their job or reducing hours

Menopause affects women directly and colleagues, friends, and partners indirectly, and while it's not always easy to discuss menopause openly, we must all do our part to make everyone feel comfortable. Menopause can be such a **mentally and physically overwhelming experience**, that women often find it difficult to explain to colleagues, partners, and friends. We all have a role to play in reducing the menopause taboo in the workplace and **normalising conversations** on the subject will help to build understanding and awareness to support colleagues.

In a recent survey of women in the workforce experiencing menopause:





Increasing menopause awareness

Due to lack of information and the effects of taboo, women may be **unaware that they are experiencing perimenopause**. A greater awareness of menopause and its symptoms can help to build an environment that reduces stigma and give women the support they need.

Whether you are a friend or colleague, listening is one of the most important things that you can do. By giving your colleagues the **opportunity to express how they feel** and **what support they would like**, you may be able to have a sensitive, confidential conversation and signpost to appropriate support. At the very least, your colleague will appreciate feeling heard.

From a proactive point of view, find out if your employer has information on the company intranet site, has commissioned **expert external speakers**, or if they have a **wellbeing champion** or **support group** in your workplace. If awareness sessions are planned, try to attend these and be familiar with what menopause is, when it happens, and its symptoms. The more knowledgeable you are, the more comfortable women will feel approaching you for support. Awareness will also provide confidence in your abilities during sensitive conversations.

If you are unsure how your workplace supports menopause, ask HR if there are **menopause policies**, if there is specific support available, and where to find it.

Supporting your colleagues through menopause



Almost nine in 10 (87%) working women want their employer to be more supportive when it comes to women's health. Not every woman will want to discuss their private concerns due to stigma or the possible negative impact on their career, and as colleagues, we have a duty to reduce this stigma.

Try to create open, honest relationships based on trust, showing empathy and consideration, and **offer appropriate support**. If you are a manager, plan regular one-to-one check-ins with your direct reports. Regularly asking colleagues how they are may encourage someone to discuss their concerns. Maintaining eye contact, speaking calmly, and actively listening are important requirements. Be mindful that **everyone experiences menopause differently**, so avoid making assumptions. If the person would like their information shared, agree on who will be told and what they want and do not want colleagues to know. Keeping a record of what has been agreed will be helpful.

Ask open-ended questions like **"How are you doing at the moment?"** to understand their needs and requirements. Approach conversations **sensitively, in a quiet, confidential space**.

If you think someone is uncomfortable talking about their menopause, perhaps to a male or younger manager, consider suggesting conversations with a menopause champion, a **member of HR** or **Occupational Health**, or refer to your workplace **Employee Assistance Programme**.



Helpful adjustments

Each menopause is unique, so it's important to ask what can be done to provide support.

Adjustments may include:

- Flexible working hours, particularly if there are problems with sleep
- Regular breaks to help manage stress
- Fans for cool airflow
- Private areas for rest
- Uniform changes with loose fitting, breathable fabric
- Changing some duties in their role if some are more challenging or stressful
- Working from home to be nearer bathroom facilities
- Access to cold water
- Time off to attend medical appointments

If you are unsure which adjustments are allowable in your workplace, seek specific advice from Occupational Health and HR for clarification.



Signposting journey

Find out what support is available within your workplace through **Occupational Health, HR**, your **Employee Assistance Provider**, support groups or menopause champions. A GP will also be able to provide support and run through your available treatment options.

Looking for more support? Contact **HealthHero** today.
