

Navigating Menopause in the Workplace:

Strategies for Supporting Your Team

UP ON THE BLOG



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The Tech landscape is evolving. Attracting, retaining, and empowering talented employees in today's world requires business leaders to think about more than just buying the right technology or offering a competitive salary. There's a growing focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, designed to ensure every employee can thrive in any workplace.

In recent years, many companies have begun investing more heavily in DEI initiatives, working with [specialist recruiters](#) to connect with talent from a range of industries and environments.

However, there's still a portion of the growing workforce that's often overlooked.

Though the government is encouraging people over the age of 50 to transition back into the workplace, many IT organisations still don't accommodate the needs of older employees. With age comes new challenges, one of the most common of which for women is menopause.

Approximately [75 to 80% of all women](#) at menopausal age are still at work according to one study. Yet few organisations have specific policies and strategies in place to assist menopausal individuals in managing their symptoms, both physical and mental.

In an age of significant skill shortages and workplace transformation, companies can't afford to overlook the benefits of making their environment welcoming and accessible to all employees, including those of menopausal age.

Menopause: What Every IT Manager Needs to Know

Menopause is a completely natural occurrence, which happens after a woman has her last period. Usually, it takes place between the ages of 45 and 55. However, some people will experience menopause earlier than most, as a result of surgery, medical conditions, and other factors.

Menopause and perimenopause symptoms can have a significant impact on a person's life, influencing their mood, cognition, and overall wellness. Common issues like hot flashes, caused by a decrease in oestrogen levels, can prompt migraines, anxiety, irregular body temperature, and more. Around [75% of women](#) experience physical issues during menopause.

Notably, while most studies and reports on menopause symptoms and experiences focus on women, it's worth noting it can be a far more wide-ranging issue. Men can be affected by "male menopause", known as andropause. Additionally, menopause can also influence the quality of life of non-binary, and trans, people.

Menopause Symptoms

While Menopause is a common and natural occurrence in many people's lives, it's also something still not fully understood in the scientific world. Every individual can experience the process differently. Some may treat symptoms with hormone replacement therapy, while others rely largely on lifestyle changes to ease discomfort.

The symptoms of this transition can influence people on both a physical and psychological level and common issues include:

- Hot flashes or hot flushes
- Irregular periods
- Night sweats and insomnia
- Headaches or migraines
- Weight gain
- Mood changes (anger, depression, and anxiety)
- Joint stiffness and mobility issues
- Memory problems or loss of concentration
- In women, the decrease of oestrogen associated with the menopause can also lead to a higher risk of other health issues, including heart attacks, stroke, and osteoporosis.

How Can Menopause Impact an Employee's Work?

Tech managers need to be aware of the issues linked to the menopause, because it can have a significant impact on a person's performance in the workplace. Additionally, it's worth noting the number of menopausal individuals in the workforce is growing. Currently, menopausal women are one of the [fastest-growing workforce](#) demographics in a recent UK government report.

Sometimes, menopause will have very little impact on a person, aside from the occasional hot flush or moment of "brain fog". However, the transitional period can have a significant impact on a person's productivity, concentration, and performance levels.

Employees experiencing menopause may be more withdrawn in the workplace or may feel embarrassed dealing with regular sweating and hot flushes around other staff members.

Studies have even found that [one in 10 women](#) have quit work completely because of menopause symptoms that became unbearable.

Side effects of menopause can also make it harder for employees to work safely in any environment. They may need more support than other employees from time to time, may struggle to focus during certain episodes, and could even need to make changes to their working environment.

What Can a IT Manager do to Support Menopausal Employees?

As a IT manager, you can take steps to make the workplace a more welcoming and comfortable place for individuals experiencing menopause. Making changes to your company culture, policies, and approach to dealing with menopausal staff can mean they'll be more likely to stick with your business for longer.

1. Provide Guidance and Information

First, to truly support Tech staff members going through the menopause, business leaders need to adjust their approach to discussing the topic. Many women don't immediately recognise that they're going through menopause, because it's often something people don't discuss.

Putting the information out there for employees to access, via a knowledgebase or intranet is an excellent way to educate and support your staff members. Ensuring employees know who they can talk to when they're experiencing changes in their health can also make your workplace a more comfortable, and inclusive environment for every employee.

2. Train Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors should be able to offer support, empathy, and guidance to Tech employees dealing with menopause symptoms. Business leaders can assist in making the workplace a more welcoming environment, by training managers to listen sensitively to employee issues and respond accordingly to requests.

Employers should train all team leaders to ensure they know how menopause can affect individuals in the workplace, and what support and guidance the organisation can offer. Managers and supervisors should also know how to deal with menopause issues sensitively and fairly. They should be able to work with each employee to customise their workflow to their needs.

3. Conduct Health and Safety Checks

Many people are unaware Menopause can impact the safety of employees in the workplace. By law, IT employers are responsible for preserving the health and safety of all of their staff – including those working from home. As such, business leaders should be prepared to conduct risk assessments of their staff's workplace and working processes.

For staff going through menopause, it's important to ensure symptoms aren't worsened by work practices or the workplace itself. Risk assessments could include examining the temperature and ventilation of the workplace, the material of the employee's uniform, and their access to toilets and suitable rest locations.

Risk and safety assessments should be regularly reviewed to ensure the workplace remains healthy and supportive for all employees.

4. Find Practical Solutions to Issues

Since all Tech employees can experience menopause differently, the best way to address the issues each team member is facing is with a dedicated discussion. Managers and other business leaders should sit down with employees and discuss their most concerning symptoms. Together, they can come up with practical solutions to common problems.

For instance, it might be necessary to provide employees with new, more breathable uniforms to help with hot flashes or ensure they always have access to cold water and ventilation. For some staff members, it may be a good idea to consider more flexible working hours or remote and hybrid working strategies.

5. Develop Policies

To ensure staff feels fully supported in an IT environment, managers and business leaders should ensure policies are in place related to menopause. These policies should be shared throughout the entire organisation and be regularly reviewed and updated.

The policies you develop may vary, but they should highlight insights into how managers should deal with employees experiencing menopausal symptoms, and how they can offer support. The policies could also outline who will be responsible for ensuring the safety of employees dealing with menopausal symptoms.

Crucially, managers should also plan how to handle time-off requests, and absences caused by menopause. For instance, employees may need to adjust their hours from time to time to ensure they can go to appointments and get the right treatment for their symptoms.

6. Create Menopause and Wellbeing Champions

As demand for wellbeing in the workplace continues to grow, creating champions and individuals responsible for assisting others in protecting their physical and psychological health could be extremely helpful. Having a wellbeing champion at work, with in-depth knowledge of the menopause and its symptoms ensures staff has someone to reach out to when they're encountering problems caused by menopause.

With support from these Tech champions, employers, HR, and managers can run workshops to raise awareness, monitor health and safety risks, and even set up a support network for staff affected by the menopause transition.

How Can You Attract and Retain Valuable Talent?

Research in the [current employment landscape](#) indicates that menopausal symptoms have forced countless employees out of the workforce. People suffering from the menopause have delayed applying for promotions, and even avoided going back to work later in life.

In a skills-short IT environment, creating a workplace that's supportive and comfortable for people experiencing menopause can be extremely beneficial. It ensures business leaders can access a wider range of talented professionals, and improve their reputation.

Attracting and retaining valuable talent in the aging workforce will require business leaders to:

- **Rethink company policies:** Allowing for flexible working, remote working, and other forms of employment will ensure menopausal individuals can manage their careers around their symptoms, without having to leave the workplace.
- **Improve company culture:** A company culture that's supportive, open, and inclusive will ensure every member of staff feels respected and cared for, regardless of their physical or psychological symptoms.
- **Listen to staff members:** Employers and business leaders will need to listen more carefully to the issues staff members are facing during menopause, and look for new ways to improve their working experiences.

Working with a specialist Tech recruitment professional will also ensure business leaders can create job opportunities that are attractive to people from all backgrounds, and of all ages. A recruitment expert will ensure job descriptions and new opportunities are designed with the needs of menopausal employees in mind. They can also help to promote your company's roles to a wider range of diverse individuals.

I hope this helps show how Supporting menopausal needs builds a diverse and successful team.

All the best

Rachel

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