**Menopause in Employment: An employee’s guide**

For some, the effects of the menopause can have a serious impact, putting a real strain on an individual’s wellbeing, relationships, and performance at work. These problems can be exacerbated when the health condition is badly handled. So how should an employee suffering with the Menopause act to help themselves and those around them?

***Understand your condition***

Stages and types of menopause can vary immensely from individual to individual and can be medically complicated. Start by finding out more about the menopause and its potential symptoms on the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

***Be open and talk***

For many, the menopause is still a taboo subject, but it shouldn’t be. We would recommend that you are open and frank with your employer at an early stage concerning the impact the stages and symptoms of menopause may be having on you. Unless your employer is made aware of the health conditions you are suffering with, they are unable to support you properly and to work with you to get the best out of you.

Your employer should enable a private and confidential conversation and keep any information that you divulge about your health private. Ensure that you agree with your employer how this information will be protected.

It may be that you do not feel able to talk to your manager, so find out who else you can talk to: HR, a wellbeing champion, an employee assistance programme counsellor.

Remember though that you employer will need to have some information about your condition to be able to know how to help you.

***Seek and follow medical advice***

It is vitally important that you seek medical advice and follow recommendations. Furthermore, it is usually in your own interests to share some of that advice with your employer. Without up-to-date knowledge and awareness of the problems you are facing, is challenging for even a very progressive employer to support you to enable you to continue to perform your role well.

***How can I resolve concerns with my employer?***

Your employer should have internal grievance procedures that you can use if you feel that you have not been appropriately supported at work. Raising even an informal grievance can result in a resolution to help you.

You may decide to make an application to work flexibly, informally or formally, in order to assist management of your symptoms. Ask your employer whether they have a flexible working policy and how you should approach making requests. Requests may include for example working from home, flexible start and finish times and part time working.

***What are my legal rights?***

The Equality Act 2010 stipulates that someone who suffers from a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on day-to-day activities, has a ‘disability’. Whilst not all menopausal symptoms would result in an individual being deemed disabled under the Equality Act, some women with more severe symptoms may be afforded protection in this regard. If so, the employer is under a legal obligation to consider and make ‘reasonable adjustments’, which may include altered hours, working from home, more breaks. A failure to do so could give rise to a discrimination claim.

The Equality Act 2010 also affords protection where an individual going through the menopause is treated less favourably due to age or sex, or where an employee going through the menopause is subject to harassment or sexual harassment.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, requires employers, where reasonably practical, to ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare at work. Your employer owes you a basic duty of care in this regard and whilst it is unlikely that a criminal offence would arise where workplace health and safety does not take into account effects and impacts of menopause, you may be able to argue a breach of contract for failure in this duty of care.

If you feel that you have been put at a disadvantage or treated less favourably you can bring claims against your employer in an Employment Tribunal.

***Seek other support?***

The good news is there are increasing amounts of support and assistance available and employer awareness and support resource is vastly improved:

* The government has launched a menopause task force which will include review and support for menopause in the workplace
* [Acas](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1461) has [menopause at work guidance](https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work?utm_source=acas&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=menopause) to help employers and managers support their staff.
* There are a number of campaigns aimed at increasing menopause awareness and support:
	+ **Menopause Support’s** [#MakeMenopauseMatter](https://menopausesupport.co.uk/?page_id=71)
	+ Wellbeing of Women [The Menopause Workplace Pledge](https://www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/news/over-600-employers-sign-the-menopause-workplace-pledge)
* In addition to guidance from Menopause Support, [Loch Employment Law](https://lochassociates.co.uk/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwpcOTBhCZARIsAEAYLuWagEoio6nRZKB9aN64wBd3iMTxpYG2EVpmSmd7L6D7TEU_AQSNnKIaArseEALw_wcB) can provide personal to you about your menopause and any employment concerns.