



How employers can support women going through menopause

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One reason savvy employers should prioritise discussions on the menopause, as well as other health issues impacting women at work, is that employees and candidates are increasingly demanding more and actively seeking out job opportunities that offer better support through diversity and inclusion benefits and initiatives.

The research shows that not only does this assist companies to attract and retain top talent, but there is a direct link between employee wellness and productivity. Finding ways to demonstrate that an organisation cares about its employees also minimises the risk of employee claims.

Concerning statistics have prompted global conversations on the impact of menopause in the workplace. Circle In, an Australian employee experience business, surveyed 700 employees and found that 46 per cent felt stressed at having to hide their experience of menopause at work. This feeling is not limited to female employees – individuals from non-binary and transgender communities may also experience menopausal symptoms yet may not have made their employer aware of their gender identity.

Wellbeing of Women, a UK charity, found that up to one in four women consider leaving their job because of menopause. This is not surprising given that some of the most common symptoms, such as hot flushes, anxiety attacks and brain fogs could easily impact working ability.

These statistics indicate the possibility that the pool of senior women eligible for leadership roles may be shrinking as a result of inadequate support for menopausal employees.

This isn't just poor for team morale and employee retention; it can also hinder an employer's ability to close any gender pay gaps if there are fewer women available to take on higher-paid senior roles. Unfortunately, this sits against a backdrop of increasing gender pay gaps as a result of working mothers leaving the workforce during the pandemic.

The UK government recognises the broader impact menopause has on economic participation. It's consulting on ways to improve the protection and support for menopausal employees, including:

- Whether existing legal protection for employees with menopause should be extended. Currently, in the UK employees can bring a discrimination claim on the grounds of age, sex or disability. However, labelling menopause as a 'disability' is controversial given it is experienced by more than half of the population at some point in their lifetime.
- The best and most inclusive workplace practices (including how to support employees who experience the menopause though they do not identify as women).

These UK developments may pave the way for international governments considering similar employee protections. Countries such as the US and Australia do not currently have any menopause-specific laws, but as issues impacting women in the workplace (such as sexual harassment and miscarriage) are gaining momentum and greater public discussion, it is likely that these discussions will eventually filter into other topics that impact women at work, including menopause and menstruation.

In Australia, we have recently seen the significant momentum that a public campaign can generate through the #LeaveForLoss campaign that was run by the Pink Elephants Network, which ultimately resulted in a change to the law so that any employee experiencing a miscarriage is now entitled to paid leave.

How can employers support employees experiencing menopause?

- Ask employees, or any existing D&I networks, what support they need.
- Introduce a menopause support policy with guidance on available support (for example; from health insurers, internal support groups) and which flags points of contact (such as HR) with whom any concerns may be raised.
- Train HR teams and management on how to support impacted employees. Charities and menopause societies are increasingly offering helpful guidance in this area.

To read the full article click [here](#).