

Breaking the silence on the menopause

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Pimples and period pains as teenagers (and beyond), grumpy teenagers, empty nest syndrome, or ageing parents when we get to middle age. Throughout our lives, the challenges that we face can differ from person to person, but the one thing that most women will face is the menopause.

Numerous reports have helped to highlight the effects that this can have on the working lives of many women. For instance, [research from the CIPD](#) revealed that three out of five (59%) working women aged between 45 and 55 who were experiencing menopause symptoms said that it negatively impacts on them at work.

Talking openly about menopause at work

Acas's own conversations with employers, trade unions and women have made it clear that it is an area to which we should all give serious thought.

We've heard about women who've had to leave their employment; women who've been asked to wear unsuitable uniforms that aggravate symptoms; and women who feel uncomfortable in the workplace because of disparaging remarks, ridicule or 'banter'. We're also well aware that sometimes this overflows onto colleagues, HR departments and managers. It can certainly impact on partners, children, parents and friends – all of whom may be employees too.

With women over 50 now the fastest growing part of the workforce and with most experiencing the menopause between 45 and 55, there's an urgent business need to banish the taboo and talk openly about what is an entirely natural part of the ageing process.

What to do in practice

Here are some ways employers can get started:

- Create and implement a menopause-specific policy as a first step to demonstrating your commitment to this issue.
- Provide awareness-raising training to all staff, including managers, to create a culture in which open discussions can be had without fear of judgement. At the same time, respect those who wish to keep things private.
- Make adjustments to working patterns and locations, such as homeworking, and allow breaks when required.
- Consider the impact of the physical environment on symptoms and make appropriate changes, such as providing desk fans, cold water and shower facilities.
- Don't make assumptions. Although 80% of women experience noticeable effects during the menopause (['The menopause in the workplace', TUC](#)), remember that they won't all be the same or of the same intensity.

Supporting all employees to thrive

With a greater focus in recent years on enabling the full participation of women in the labour market, breaking the culture of silence around the menopause is one step towards this goal.

And organisations that support all employees to thrive will reap the rewards of increased engagement, greater job satisfaction and a diverse and inclusive workforce.

How Acas can help

Acas has [guidance on the menopause at work](#) to help support you further.

We have also developed new training to help you develop a clear understanding of the menopause, common misconceptions and the legal position.

[Book onto menopause and the workplace training.](#)