

The menopause: HR guide

Introduction

Employers need to understand the **menopause** and the different effects that it can have on women.

With employment rates of women over 50 increasing dramatically in recent decades, it's clear that the **menopause** is an important workplace issue.

What is the menopause and its effects?

The **menopause** is defined as when a woman permanently stops having periods.

According to the [NHS website](#), the menopause usually occurs between the age of 45 and 55 and the average age for the **menopause** is 51.

Symptoms could include, for example, hot flushes, difficulties in sleeping, low mood or anxiety and problems with concentration or memory.

About 80% of women experience some symptoms of the **menopause** and 20% of these women experience severe symptoms.

Disability discrimination

Women who suffer from the symptoms of the **menopause** could in certain severe cases fall within [disability discrimination](#) protection.

To fall within scope a person would have to have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long-term means that the adverse effect has lasted more than one year or is likely to last more than one year. Normal day-to-day activities could include concentration.

Where a person comes within the definition, an employer must not discriminate which would include having to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Sex discrimination

Where an employer, for instance, fails to take into account the **menopause** on a woman's work performance an employer could potentially be [discriminating against because of sex](#). A key question would be whether the employer would have treated a man suffering from similar symptoms differently.

Other claims

Women suffering from the **menopause** who are treated badly by their employer could have other claims, such as for [age discrimination](#). A related dismissal could be unfair too.

Tips

Irrespective of employers' legal obligations, there are good reasons why employers should recognise the **menopause** at work. Taking the issue seriously will help boost productivity and performance and help retain staff. Steps that employers should consider taking include:

- Having a **menopause** policy which is communicated to staff.
- Creating an open environment where women are comfortable about discussing the **menopause** with their line managers.
- Offering an alternative option for discussing concerns.
- Making reasonable adjustments in particular cases such as allowing time off work and changing performance targets.
- Providing occupational health support.
- Offering flexible working.
- Providing fans and cold water.

This guide is intended for guidance only and should not be relied upon for specific advice.

If you need any advice on **the menopause** or other employment law issues please do not hesitate to [contact](#) me on [020 3797 1264](tel:02037971264)

Do check mattgingell.com regularly for updated information.