



to women leaving their jobs, in fact one in four women consider it, according to the Wellbeing in Women Survey 2016.

Currently many workers do not disclose their menopausal symptoms at work and many who take time off work because of the menopause do not tell their employer the real reason for their absence. This is because the worker can feel that:

- \* Their symptoms are a private and/or personal matter
- \* Their symptoms might be embarrassing for them and/or the person they would be confiding in
- \* They do not know their manager well enough
- \* Their manager is a man or younger or may be unsympathetic/empathetic

They may also worry that:

- \* Their symptoms will not be taken seriously
- \* If they do tell someone, then others in the organisation will know
- \* They will be thought less capable in their role
- \* Their job security or chances at promotion will be harmed

Equally managers may feel that:

- \* They don't feel confident in talking about the menopause
- \* They don't know enough about it or how they can help
- \* They may feel it embarrassing to talk about especially if they are male

Importantly, managers do not need to be medical experts and how a woman manages her menopause is between her and her GP or specialist, unless it is affecting her work or she wants to talk about it.

However, line managers should have a good level of general knowledge and understanding so that they can support their employees and understand how to have a good, supportive conversation.

Organisations should develop a policy and train their line managers, supervisors and team leaders to make sure that they understand:

- \* How to have a conversation with a worker raising a perimenopause or menopause concern
- \* How the perimenopause or menopause can affect a worker
- \* How to carefully manage sickness absence or a dip in job performance
- \* What support and/or changes for the worker might be appropriate
- \* The law relating to the menopause including considering reasonable adjustments and Health & Safety risk assessments

It is worth noting that in an Employment Tribunal, menopause symptoms have been accepted as a disability. Consequently, it is advisable, as well as being good practice, for an employer to consider making changes for a worker experiencing perimenopausal or menopausal symptoms. There is a risk, under the Equality Act

2010, of sex discrimination, disability discrimination and age discrimination if a worker is mismanaged because of their menopause or perimenopause symptoms.

As well as understanding the risks associated with mismanagement of workers, it is important to foster an environment in which women feel comfortable and confident talking to their managers and where managers are understanding and also follow clear guidelines and direct women to occupational health, if necessary.

There are also clear and compelling reasons for supporting menopausal women in the workplace and supporting them through the menopausal transition should be considered best practice by employers:

- ✿ **The cost of recruitment** to replace women who leave the business is around £30k including direct recruitment costs and bring a new member of the team up to speed according to Oxford Economics.
- ✿ **Cost of absence** according to the Office of National Statistics, the groups who experience the highest rates of absence include older women and those working in large organisations.
- ✿ **Cost of employee relations issues or tribunals** the average cost of defending a case is £8,500 which doesn't include the cost of any awards or the claimant's legal fees, if won.

As well as being an important health and wellbeing matter, managing menopause in the workplace sensitively and effectively will help an employer retain and recruit skills and experience.

*Do you have a Menopause Policy in your workplace or A Manager's Guide for Supporting Menopause in the Workplace? CBR Business Solutions can provide you with an up to date policy and advise you on implementation.*

Useful links:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6752>

[https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/menopause-people-professionals-top-tips\\_tcm18-55428.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/menopause-people-professionals-top-tips_tcm18-55428.pdf)

[https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/menopause-customisable-guide-for-people-managers\\_tcm18-55427.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/menopause-customisable-guide-for-people-managers_tcm18-55427.pdf)

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