

Crucial Conversations About Menopause

Discussing menopause in the workplace is becoming more common as organizations recognize the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive environments for their employees at all life stages. Employers worldwide are embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives to create a greater sense of community and understanding, which includes addressing the needs and challenges faced by employees experiencing menopause. Efforts are also being made to raise awareness, reduce stigma around menopause and aging, and provide support for women navigating the menopause transition. Menopause is not about age; it's about transition.

The door may be more open than you think...

Almost half of supervisors said they have participated in conversations about menopause, and 1/3 of those who have not had conversations said they would like to.

Talking to Your Supervisor or HR Department

Navigating menopause is an important experience of women's health that often remains silent in the workplace, with only 3 out of 5 women feeling comfortable asking for accommodations to address challenges during work. Although talking with a supervisor or HR representative about personal health matters can be sensitive and unfamiliar territory for both employees and employers, these conversations are crucial for fostering your best work life. The opportunity may also allow you to share your thoughts on your productivity, job satisfaction, career goals, and the organizational commitment to equity and inclusion.

You are not obligated to disclose a specific diagnosis to your employer. However, you should work with your health care provider to communicate your health challenges and your need for accommodations to your employer.

Some things to prepare before you meet with HR and/or your supervisor/manager:

- ▶ List of symptoms and how they specifically affect your ability to function at work
- ▶ List of actions you have taken to address symptom disruptions to your work
- ▶ Suggestions for accommodations
- ▶ Questions about current policies or resources for employee health and wellness



Talking with Coworkers

Having conversations about menopause with coworkers and peers is a vital step toward breaking down barriers, creating a supportive workplace culture, and normalizing discussions about the menopause experience. Personal health can be a challenging topic to discuss in a professional setting; however, such conversations with trusted coworkers can result in individuals feeling seen, heard, and better supported.

Because menopause symptoms vary widely from one individual to the next, showcasing its diversity helps to combat stereotypes and promotes a better understanding of this life stage. Creating spaces for open dialogue can encourage others to share their experiences and foster a sense of community and mutual support that prioritizes the well-being of all employees. After all, 2 out of 3 survey respondents said they felt comfortable offering support to a coworker going through menopause.

Before speaking with your employer, talk to your health care provider about your bothersome symptoms. They may have recommendations for medical and/or lifestyle approaches to manage your symptoms. Bringing a letter from your provider may also support your request for workplace accommodations.



Employee Resource Groups are a valuable way to connect with peers for support. Check if there is one dedicated to women's health or menopause at your workplace. If not, consider starting one and asking your coworkers to join.