

Can more be done to support menopause at work

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Catherine works closely with key stakeholders and the Equality Advisory and Support Service Advice team. They work together to provide informal guidance on the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.

The Equality Advisory and Support Service helpline advises people who experience discrimination. Around half of the people who contact us are raising issues of possible discrimination at work.

On the Equality Advisory and Support Service helpline, the volume of questions about the menopause has increased each year. One of the biggest issues we see is that menopausal symptoms are having a significant effect on work performance, which can be worrying for the person affected.

How equality law currently stands on the menopause

The protection for someone experiencing the effects of the menopause is complicated as the menopause is not automatically protected by the Equality Act 2010.

Instead we would have to look at the protection covered by the protected characteristics of age, disability and sex. Find more information on protected characteristics on the [Equality Advisory and Support Service website](#).

One thing we've learned from the cases that have gone to court about the menopause, is that there are no automatic rights for women experiencing the menopause. Instead, they are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

But we understand that there are universal symptoms of the menopause. Menopause affects all women at some point in their lives and this conversation of support could have started a long time ago.

It's clear more needs to be done

A lot of the difficulties that women at work face connected to the menopause include:

- performance and how the menopause affects this, for example fatigue and brain fog have a particularly significant effect and yet women find themselves subject to organisational policies they feel are unfair
- a lack of awareness of the effects of menopause, with employers showing a lack of support and consideration towards menopausal symptoms
- adjustments to help with working from home
- existing conditions that are made worse by the menopause, particularly with mental health

What employers can do

Employers could educate themselves on what would help a lot of women to continue in their employment. Women should not have to struggle through hot flushes, brain fog, fatigue and other symptoms.

These symptoms have always been there, so the support should be there too. Bringing in simple but effective adjustments, like a fan or additional breaks, can make a big difference.

If you have an employee currently going through the menopause and are concerned about their performance, consider whether menopause could be a factor before taking action.

If you are unsure, then it can be a good idea to speak with that employee to discuss the effects and any support you could give them. Starting the conversation and opening communication means they are supported and feel they can go to you with their concerns.

Getting support

Employers and employees can get advice from Acas for supporting those who are experiencing menopausal symptoms:

- [read Acas advice on menopause at work](#)
- [contact the Acas helpline](#)

The Equality Advisory Support Service supports and guides anyone who wants to understand their rights under the Equality Act. We can help you work towards an informal resolution wherever possible. Find out more on the [Equality Advisory and Support Service website](#).