

Supporting Employees In midlife and menopause

Employee Benefits Live
8th October 2024

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Head of People



Intro

- **Tracy Lowe Sheppard**

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- 20 years' experience in HR and Payroll
- Delivered in all areas of the employee life cycle from recruitment to offboarding including reward, recognition, systems and analytics
- Introduced wellbeing initiatives in several organisations over the years to support a consistent employee experience
- Currently working at Swim England as the Head of People

Why is employee wellbeing important?

Fostering employee wellbeing is good for people and the organisation.

Promoting wellbeing can help prevent stress and create positive working environments where individuals and organisations can thrive.

Good health and wellbeing can be a core enabler of employee engagement and organisational performance.

CIPD - 2nd September 2024

Midlife and Menopause

- Not just about women!
- Menopausal women are the fastest growing workplace demographic
- Retirement age is now 68 – varies depending on year of birth
- The age at which people start the menopause varies but can start as early as 40 (surgical menopause can be earlier)
- 51 is the average age that a women will go through the menopause
- Nearly 8 out of 10 menopausal women are in work
- Each person's experience of menopause is different and unique to them

The Myths

Menopause begins at 50

Menopause is the same for everyone

Menopausal symptoms aren't bad enough for a doctor visit

The first sign of menopause is hot flashes

Menopause only causes physical symptoms

Women are 'over the hill' post menopause



So, what is Menopause?



- The menopause is a natural stage of life when menstrual cycles stop
- Some conditions may induce early menopause
- There are 3 stages – Perimenopause, Menopause and Post Menopause
- Each individual will have their own unique experience. There are oestrogen receptors all over the body so women are systemically affected in a number of different ways
- Many will experience symptoms and endure negative impact (both at home and at work) on their physical and mental health

The impact on the workplace

- Taking 51 as the average age of menopause, the symptoms can often occur at the peak of a women's career
- One in four women consider leaving work due to menopausal symptoms
- Currently around 10% of women aged 45-55 have left jobs due to menopause
- Only 9% of menopausal women disclose the real absence reason to their manager. 41% believed their abilities would be questioned if they disclosed menopause as the reason for their absence
- This is a huge loss to an organisation. Years of talent and experience lost due to a natural process of aging

The impact on the individual

Psychological Symptoms

- Low mood
- Loss of interest in most things
- Crying spells
- Feeling unhappy or depressed
- Memory problems, brain fog
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability and rage
- Mood swings
- Feeling tense or nervous
- Anxiety/anxiety attacks or panic attacks
- Loss of confidence

Physical Symptoms

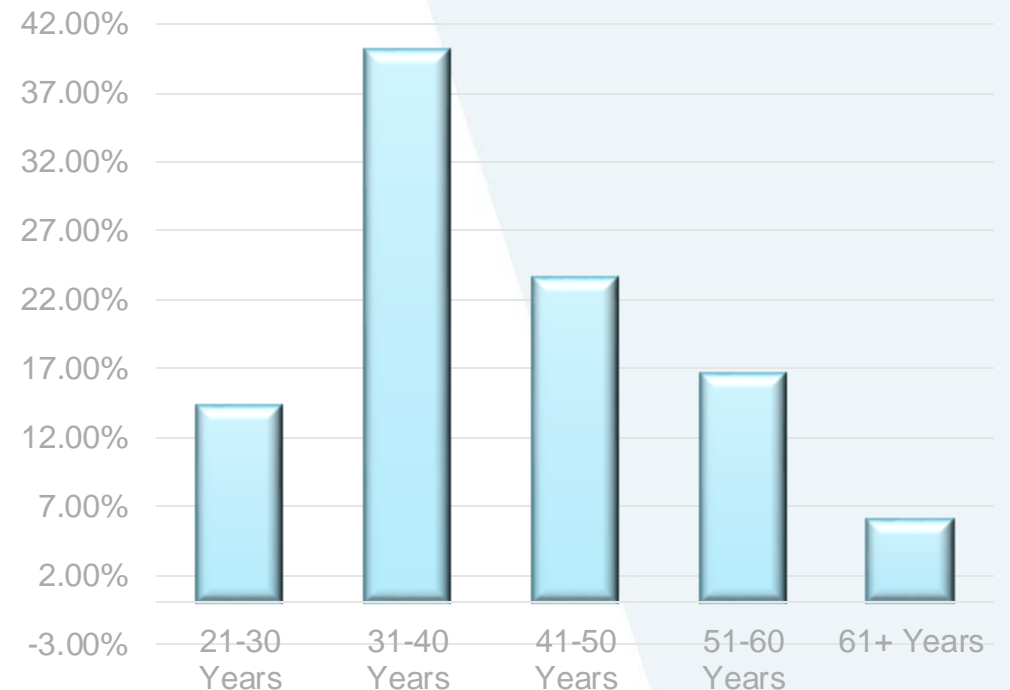
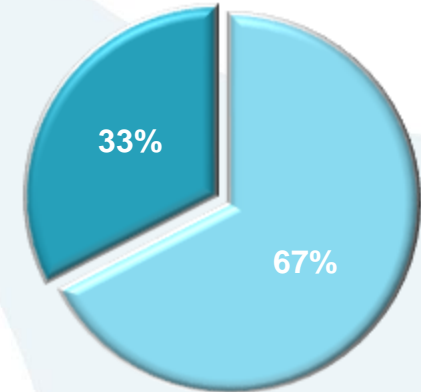
- Hot flushes/Night sweats
- Pressure or tightness in head , headaches
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ear)
- Difficulty in sleeping / poor sleep, feeling tired or lacking in energy
- Muscle and joint pains
- Dry skin, dry mouth and eyes
- Heart beating fast, breathing difficulties
- Irregular, heavy or light periods and flooding
- Urinary issues/ UTIs and incontinence

So what can we do?

- Understand your workforce
- Get your Senior Leaders, HR and Training teams on board – top down approach
- Educate **all** your employees
- Support Line Managers with training and guidance
- Signpost employees to specialist providers of support
- Talk about it!

Employee Gender Split

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Culture and best practice

Some of the actions an organisation can take – **Be Proactive:**

- Awareness
- Internal guidelines
- Making reasonable adjustments to working patterns and conditions
- Sharing information about the menopause with staff e.g. via intranet or notice board/ news
- Menopause training and briefing session for senior leaders and managers
- Menopause training and briefings session for all staff
- Having a designated person who your teams can speak to about the menopause
- Ensuring clear and available guidelines for staff including aspects like being able to take time off for menopause reasons and any other measures

Signposting and Support

For those going through the menopause and all-staff

- **The Menopause Charity** Excellent range of useful, practical advice to help people manage the menopause
- **The Balance website** - Resources to provide inclusive and accessible information about the menopause to all women and trans and non-binary people
- **Balance App** - The free **balance** app allows people to track their symptoms, access personalised expert content, download a health report and share stories in the community
- **NHS** information on menopause - NHS advice and information for people about the menopause including symptoms, interventions and treatment

Signposting and Support

For employers, team leaders and line managers

- Supporting staff through the menopause - Resources from the **Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)** that cover how employers can support staff through every stage of the menopause
- Menopause in the workplace - Resources from **Women's Health Concern** covering how the menopause can impact work, what it means for line managers / organisations
- Menopause in the Workplace Toolkit from **BITC**
- Professional Menopause Guidance **CIPD** - Full resources and guidance on how to provide effective support for employees experiencing the menopause. Covers all aspects of the menopause at work
- **Equality & Human Rights Commission** – Menopause in the workplace – Guidance for employers – videos and useful information

Signposting and Support



Lucy Heaton

- Menopause Coach/ Wellbeing Consultant
- Nutritional Therapist
- Menopause Yoga Teacher
- 20+ years of healthcare comms and education

What have Swim England done so far?

- Expert support and guidance from an external resource
- 5 awareness sessions – delivered via Zoom to provide anonymity - available to all
- Slides accessible after the sessions along with signposting to resources – available to all including employee's families
- SLT training and support
- Line Manager training (compulsory)
- Guidelines for Managers
- Toiletries available in all toilets
- *What next?*

It's the small changes that make a big difference

Every Little Supports

- Toiletries in all toilets including deodorant/anti-perspirant etc
- Fans! – Air circulation in the office
- An area for those experiencing symptoms to escape for a moment – safe space, a private room
- A locker or drawer to store a spare change of clothes and personal toiletries
- Large cardigans in the toilet area
- Awareness ! Make it part of your language

What are the outcomes?

Just some of the benefits include:

- Removing the stigma creates a more supportive, inclusive and understanding workplace
- Retain your experienced talent
- Reduce absence
- Avoid grievances
- Sends a clear message to employees that the organisation cares about its employee's wellbeing
- Creates a culture of trust
- Open, honest and transparent workplace

The legal bit - Menopause and the law

- Menopause is now a quasi protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010
- If menopausal symptoms have a long term and substantial impact on a woman's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities they may be considered a disability
- If menopause symptoms amount to a disability, an employer will be under legal obligation to not directly or indirectly discriminate - because of the disability, as well as harassment and victimisation on the grounds of age and sex and gender identity
- Employers could be sued for disability discrimination if they fail to make "reasonable adjustments" for women going through menopause under new guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on 22/02/24, amid concern over the number of women leaving their jobs due to symptoms
- E.G. Taking disciplinary action against women for a menopause related-absence could amount to discrimination, and that language that ridicules someone's symptoms could constitute harassment.



Q&A

Thank You



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