

## **How to support menopausal women in the workplace?**

**Advice by Catherine Bergeron, Health and Safety Services Manager, at HR consulting firm Peninsula Canada**

### **What are some menopausal symptoms?**

The most common menopausal symptoms that women experience includes the following:

- Lack of energy
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Muscle and joint aches
- Insomnia
- Bladder control issues
- Heart palpitations
- Headaches
- Mood changes

### **How can employers support menopausal women?**

It's important to note that menopausal symptoms can influence the employee's work, that is beyond their control. Employers have a significant role to play to ensure that anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms gets the support they need. This will help improve the overall team morale, retain valuable skills, and reduce sickness absences.

Since menopausal women experience different symptoms it's important for employers to accommodate accordingly. One of the first steps is to have an open conversation. Female managers can take lead on this conversation and encourage members of their team or across the company to openly talk about their experience with menopause. Some women feel shy or embarrassed to talk about their symptoms but when they can relate to other women who are feeling the same it creates a safe space for holding the conversation. It's important to build a relationship that is based on trust and empathy as it will make it easier for an employee to feel comfortable enough to raise a health issue like menopause.

### **What are some adjustments employers can make to support menopausal women?**

If the employee is experiencing the following symptoms, then, as an employer, consider making the adjustments listed below.

Insomnia and/or night sweats:

- Offer a flexible working arrangement. For example, starting a shift at a later start and-finish time
- If possible, offer the employee a hybrid work option

#### Hot flushes

- Provide a fan or move employee's desk closer to a window
- Provide easy access to cold drinking water
- If possible, limit the time wearing PPE or heavy uniform

#### Headaches and feeling tired

- Consider a temporary adjustment to someone's work duties
- Provide access to rest room
- Encourage employee to take regular breaks

#### Muscle and body aches

- Encourage employee to move around or stay mobile, whatever works best for them

#### Psychological issues

- Encourage employees to seek counselling through your company's Employee Assistance Program if you offer one
- Discuss adjustments to tasks and duties that are causing stress

### **Do employers legally need to have a menopause workplace policy in place?**

Although having a menopause workplace policy in place isn't mandatory, it would be effective to have one. However, by failing to support menopausal women it can lead to several practical and legal risks. These include poor employee engagement, reduced performance, absenteeism, discrimination claims, and loss of valuable employees who may feel forced to resign.

Employers do not have to create a new policy; they can review existing policies and make sure to include accommodations for employees going through menopause.