

Menopause guide

[add your workplace's name and branding]

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How to use this template

This resource is designed to help your organisation create its own menopause-supportive workplace guide. You can adapt or remove any sections to suit your size, culture, and policies. It's not exhaustive, start where you can and build over time.

Why use this template

Everyone can do something to demystify menopause, and replace the taboo with understanding, compassion and support.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) also requires employers to provide a safe work environment, as far as reasonably practicable. This includes making reasonable adjustments to support someone's health and wellbeing.

Introduction

You might want to add:

- **A short statement about why this matters to your organisation:**
Example: "We recognise that menopause can affect people's wellbeing and work, and we want everyone to feel understood and supported."
- **Your organisation's values**
Example: "Our values guide how we work together and provide support."

A menopause-supportive workplace can help people to perform at their best, reduce absenteeism and improve productivity, retain valuable talent, and strengthen diversity and inclusion.

A 2023 report by NZIER and Global Women* showed that workplace conditions are key to supporting women to maintain economic participation and productivity during menopause.

**The silent transition Understanding the impacts of menopause in New Zealand workplaces.*

Guidance for leaders and managers

Leaders play a key role in supporting staff. Employees may need flexibility or understanding through various life stages — menopause is one of them.

There are many ways you can create a positive and supportive culture so that anyone going through menopause feels informed, understood and supported.

Education

Help leaders learn about:

- What menopause is and how symptoms can affect people at work.
- Where to find reliable information.

Workplaces can make a big difference just by understanding how menopause can impact someone's health and wellbeing. Managers should be aware of menopause and how their workplace can support someone if needed.

<You might like to list any internal resources. You may choose to upload the Make Menopause Work Guide for Managers and Leaders>

Support

If an employee shares that they need support with menopause:

- Listen and ask what support they need.
- Avoid assumptions or personal questions.
- Offer confidentiality and reassurance.
- If needed, seek guidance from HR or the wellbeing team.

<You might like to insert contact details for a person, a team or EAP>

While a manager plays a critical role in creating a positive culture and supportive work environment, if employees need medical advice they should be encouraged to contact their doctor, nurse, or menopause specialist/clinic.

Guidance for anyone impacted by menopause

Everyone's experience of menopause is different. Some women may not experience symptoms or may have found solutions to manage their symptoms, but others could benefit from support at work. Below are a few things that might help.

Learn about it

- **<You might like to list where employees can find more information>**
- *E.g. Learn more about menopause - resources at the end of these guidelines.*

We can all help remove the stigma around menopause. In a safe space, saying the word out loud is a great start. The more we learn about it and talk about it, the more normal and less embarrassing it will become.

Ask for support

- **<You might like to list where employees can go for support>**
- *E.g. If you need support at work to help manage any menopause symptoms, we encourage you to talk to your manager or contact EAP.*

While a manager plays a critical role in creating a positive culture and supportive work environment, people may also need to seek medical advice from their doctor, nurse, or menopause specialist/clinic.

Ways to support staff at work

- **<Include ways that staff can be further supported at work, and what you as a workplace can do. See our Making Menopause Work checklist for ideas>**
- *E.g. Flexible working: Adjusting hours or breaks if needed.*
- *E.g. Comfortable environment: Considering desk fans or cooler workspaces.*
- *E.g. Hydration: A consideration if limited access to kitchen facilities/cold water.*
- *E.g. Leave options: Reminding staff to use sick or wellbeing leave if unwell.*



Menopause and the symptoms

<you might like to make this information available to staff in this guide and/or in other places that make sense for your organisation>

The average age of menopause in New Zealand is 51 years (between ages 45-55), but some go through menopause sooner. Menopause is usually marked by twelve months in a row without a period.

Perimenopause is the years leading up to menopause, when a series of hormonal changes can impact women's physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. From brain fog and hot flushes, to mood changes and fatigue, a range of symptoms can be experienced.

These changes can start in someone's late 30s/early 40s and last two to ten years or five years on average. For simplicity in these guidelines, when we say 'menopause' we're referring to the broader period of time which includes perimenopause and the years after menopause.

As many as 30 – 40+ symptoms can be associated with perimenopause and menopause. Everyone's experience is different, and symptoms can change over time. A New Zealand survey found that 89% of women aged 40-60 have experienced new or worsening symptoms associated with menopause.

The examples below are some of the most common symptoms that might impact women at work.

Some symptoms can be signs of other health conditions too, so if you're not sure, make an appointment to see your doctor, nurse, or a menopause specialist/clinic.

Memory and concentration issues

Brain fog, forgetfulness, difficulty finding words. Awkward and frustrating moments of not recalling words and names, and difficulty concentrating.

Mood changes

You can experience a whole range of emotions from unexpected tearfulness to anxiety, irritability, low mood or loss of joy, low self-esteem and loss of confidence. Anxiety can be persistent and a nagging feeling of tension and nervousness, which can manifest as palpitations, dry mouth, chest pain, nausea, headaches or even panic attacks.

Difficulty sleeping, tiredness or fatigue

Insomnia despite feeling tired, a persistent state of wakefulness or regularly waking up, leading to exhaustion. Feeling wiped out, drained or constantly tired from everyday life.

Hot flushes/night sweats

Unexpected and sudden rushes of heat, often in the face, neck and chest, making your skin red and sweaty. Waking up in the night and being soaked in a sheen or even pools of sweat. It might

sound counterintuitive, but you can also get a surprising onset of chills, and no matter how many clothes you put on, it can be hard to warm up.

Changes to periods

Earlier or later, lighter or heavier, shorter or longer.

Joint or muscle aches and pain

This can be an uncomfortable feeling of soreness, swelling and stiffness around the joints.

Headaches and migraines

These are often experienced as throbbing pains on one side of the head, as well as a sensitivity to light and noise.

Learn more about perimenopause and menopause

- Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora – info.health.nz/menopause
- Healthify He Puna Hauora – healthify.nz/hauora-wellbeing/m/menopause
- Australasian Menopause Society – menopause.org.au/health-info
- Sexual Wellbeing Aotearoa – sexualwellbeing.org.nz/srv/menopause
- Ministry for Women – women.govt.nz/menopause