



Tips for managers and leaders

There are many ways you can create a positive and supportive culture so that women going through menopause feel **informed, understood and supported**. It's useful to know how your existing policies might apply to those experiencing menopause symptoms e.g. flexible work, sick leave, and reasonable adjustments.

Wait for employees to self-identify

It's important that you don't assume someone is impacted by menopause. If you are concerned about an employee's wellbeing, you could ask, 'How are going?' or 'Are you OK?' or 'I've noticed you don't seem yourself lately, is there anything you would like to talk about'. It's their choice to share anything about their health with you. Either way, let them know you're happy to listen.

If they seem open to your support, you could ask if there is anything you can do to help. Knowing that a manager cares and support is available if needed will count for a lot.

Keep in mind that everyone's experience of menopause is different, and menopause can be seen differently by different cultures. Some wāhine Māori, Pacific women, and women from ethnic communities might find it harder to talk about menopause and may be hesitant to ask for help.

Keep it positive

A positive approach is essential for managers to create supportive experiences for anyone going through menopause. When an employee talks about menopause, ensure you communicate that it is not a problem for you or the organisation. It's also OK not to have all the answers during your first conversation.

Work collaboratively

Be aware that for various reasons, discussing menopause can be difficult. If an employee chooses to raise it with another manager, work collaboratively with that manager rather than questioning why they may have not gone through formal channels. As a manager, you can also ask for advice or support from the human resources or people team.

Offer support

Support can come in different forms. Some employees may just want an empathic ear, while others may want something more practical. Make sure that you have the time and space for a confidential and thorough discussion that allows the opportunity to raise concerns and steps



forward. Try to ensure you leave the conversation knowing next steps, if any, for you and your employee.

Consider reasonable adjustments

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

Examples of ways workplaces can support menopause

Everyone's experience of menopause is different—some women will need different kinds of support, while others won't need support at all.

Some will need to seek advice from health professionals and may need time off work to attend health appointments.

Memory and concentration issues (e.g. brain fog)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support to manage workload• Possible adjustments to tasks, if necessary• Encourage the use of leave to ensure breaks for rest and down time
Mood changes (e.g. anxiety, irritability, low mood, loss of confidence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support through services like Employment Assistance Programmes (EAP) or phone 1737• Support to manage workload• Possible adjustments to tasks, if necessary• A quiet area to take a break when needed
Difficulty sleeping, tiredness or fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible work options• A quiet area to take a break when needed
Hot flushes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to cold drinking water and fans• Moving a desk closer to a window, if possible• Uniform adjustments, if practical• Limiting time wearing PPE, if practical
Joint aches and pains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workstation assessment and adjustment, if necessary• Short breaks to move around e.g. stagger a lunch hour over two half hour breaks



Headaches and migraines

- More frequent breaks
- Flexible work options
- A quiet area to take a break

Heavy or irregular periods

Needing to use the bathroom more often
or more urgently

- Easy access to bathrooms
- More frequent bathroom breaks
- Period products in bathrooms

How to discuss menopause with employees

Things to say:

- Thank you for letting me know, I'm keen to work with you to ensure I am doing all that I reasonably can to support your health and wellbeing at work.
- How can I support you?
- I might have to consult with HR, health and wellbeing, or my manager to find out what our options are. Are you comfortable with that?
- You're important to the team so I want to make sure you continue to want to work with us.

Things not to say:

- I feel uncomfortable talking about this/I can't help you with this, can you speak with someone else?
- Is this an excuse for poor performance?
- I/my wife/partner didn't have any problems with menopause.
- Have you thought about retirement or moving jobs to somewhere that is easier?