



2026 DMEC Compliance Conference

Menopause in the Workplace Presented by Guardian

Presenters



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Menopause and the Workforce

Workers ages 55 or older have been the fastest-growing age group in the labor force for more than two decades and made up 24% of the U.S. workforce in 2022, up from 10% in 1994. Women make up approximately half of the workforce.

Menopause impacts nearly 1 in 5 women in today's workforce, yet it remains one of the least understood and most stigmatized health transitions.

Understanding the basics can make a huge difference in supporting colleagues and fostering morale, productivity and retention.



Definition of Menopause

Menopause is the permanent, natural cessation of menstruation and fertility, medically defined as having gone 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. It typically occurs between ages 45 and 55 (average age 51-52) as ovaries stop producing high levels of estrogen and progesterone, marking the end of reproductive years.

Causes:

Primarily a natural biological process but can be induced surgically (removal of ovaries) or by medical treatments like chemotherapy.

Early Menopause: is defined as the permanent end of menstruation before age 45, or before 40 for premature menopause, affecting roughly 5% of women.

Perimenopause: The transition period leading up to menopause, often lasting several years, where periods become irregular and symptoms begin.

Post-menopause: The phase following 12 consecutive months without a period, which lasts for the rest of a woman's life.





Key Menopause Symptoms

Vasomotor Symptoms (Hot Flashes/Night Sweats): Sudden, intense warmth in the face, neck, and chest, often accompanied by sweating.

Menstrual Changes: Periods may become irregular, shorter, longer, heavier, or lighter before stopping altogether.

Vaginal and Sexual Changes: Vaginal dryness, discomfort, or pain during intercourse, and decreased libido.

Sleep Issues: Insomnia or trouble staying asleep, often linked to night sweats.

Mood and Cognitive Changes: Irritability, anxiety, mood swings, depression, and memory or concentration issues (brain fog).

Physical Changes: Weight gain, joint pain, slower metabolism, dry skin, hair thinning, headaches, and palpitations, osteoporosis, increased tooth decay due to dry mouth.

Bladder Issues: Increased urgency or frequency of urination and urinary incontinence.

Additional: 85% have reported fatigue, 71% have reported body aches, digestive issues (bloating, digestion, microbiome), brittle nails, dizziness, allergies (immune system changes), and body odor.



Federal Protection

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

FMLA is a US federal law providing eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year for qualifying family and medical reasons. It ensures health benefits are maintained during the leave and requires employers to restore the employee to the same or an equivalent position upon return.



Federal Protection

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- ADA is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities.
- Although menopause itself is not considered a disability under ADA, in some circumstances, menopause symptoms could rise to the level of a disability and require an employer to reasonably accommodate those symptoms. The ADA defines disability to include a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Courts have recognized that the body's endocrine system, which controls hormones, qualifies as a major life activity for purposes of the ADA and that employers may have a duty to accommodate menopause symptoms.



State and City Bills

[Oregon HB 3064](#) (Requires certain health insurers, the Oregon Educators Benefit Board, and the Public Employees' Benefit Board to cover treatment for perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause)

[Washington HB1971](#) (hormone replacement therapy prescriptions)

[Maine LD 1079](#) (Act to Provide Comprehensive Perimenopause and Menopause Education to clinicians and patients)

[Rhode Island S 0361](#) (Updates and expands the current law to include menopause and menopause-related conditions in the law on fair employment practices pertaining to pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions.)

[Illinois SJR 0025](#) (Declares October 12 through October 18, 2025, as Menopause Awareness Week in the State of Illinois)

[NJ Legislature](#) (Requires NJ health insurers to cover medically necessary diagnosis and treatment for perimenopause and menopause)

City of Philadelphia: [Bill No. 25084900](#) (effective 1/1/2027 — Philadelphia has passed legislation prohibiting discrimination and requiring accommodation on the basis of needs related to menstruation, perimenopause, or menopause, becoming the first major U.S. city to explicitly offer these expansive protections.)



Impact in the Workplace

1 Financial: A 2023 Mayo Clinic study estimated that adverse menopause-related symptoms come with a price tag of \$1.8 billion in lost time, and \$26.6 billion because of the combined cost of lost work time and medical expenses in the United States. Global cost is approximately \$150 billion globally.

Fewer than 13% sought any form of treatment, and only about a third consulted a medical professional

2 Productivity: Quiet shrinking: The hidden cost of menopause Globally, between 6%-17% of women consider leaving the workforce during this phase,”and “Most women don’t leave immediately,”she says. “They stay, but at 60%-70% of their previous effectiveness. That hidden productivity loss is enormous.”

Leaders set the tone...that’s why flexibility, empathy and open conversation are essential.



Future Impact in the Workplace

When symptoms go unmanaged, women are more likely to reduce their hours, decline promotions or leave the workforce altogether. That's a direct hit to retention, productivity and leadership pipelines. This impacts future talent and growth. The implications for leadership pipelines are equally stark. As mid-life women pull back, they take with them years of mentorship, emotional labor and leadership modelling. The result is a contraction that disproportionately affects future female leaders.

If your workplace does not have menopause-friendly accommodations or policies, consider speaking with your supervisor or Human Resources department about how they can best support you or a colleague who is going through the menopause transition.



Mental Health and Menopause

Quiet shrinking: The hidden cost of menopause (key takeaways)

“What we see first is not a drop in performance, but a **drop in confidence**,” she explains. “Women start **doubting themselves**. They speak up less, avoid visibility and **stop putting themselves forward**.” “Gradual erosion of **voice and confidence**”

- Physical symptoms can lead to mental health challenges. Stress, anxiety, and depression can all be triggered by dealing with the symptoms as well as caused by the actual fluctuations in hormones.
- Depression is one of the most commonly reported symptoms of menopause. One study found 42% of perimenopausal and post-menopausal women experience depressive symptoms. The Harvard Study of Moods and Cycles established that premenopausal women with no history of depression who entered perimenopause were twice as likely to develop significant depressive symptoms when compared with women who remained premenopausal during the period of observation. A previous diagnosis or existing mental health issue can also play a part in the risk of depression during or after menopause.



Building a Friendly Menopause Culture

Four practical things you can do to build a culture where employees feel comfortable and able to have their experiences acknowledged and addressed.

- 1 Recognize menopause as a workplace issue.** Take the time to see if there is potential impact on your workforce by examining data like demographics, absenteeism, and healthcare utilization.
- 2 Invest in education.** Training leaders and managers to understand menopause symptoms, the importance of flexibility and accommodations, and how to approach conversations respectfully and openly.
- 3 Normalize the conversation.** Incorporate menopause awareness into wellness campaigns, lunch and learn events, and even employee resource groups. The more at ease people can talk about it, the less it's stigmatized.
- 4 Highlight benefits.** Let employees know the resources that are available to them regarding medical, mental health services, and the accommodation process.



Fostering an Open Environment

How can you show support?

- **Engage** — Open the door to building relationships with your coworkers. Ask about how they are doing and what support they might need. Sharing your own life experiences may encourage others to do the same
- **Empathize** — Acknowledge your biases and be curious. Ask questions sensitively and actively listen to the responses so you can better understand other people's experiences and how they make them feel.
- **Educate** — Be an ally and advocate to promote change. Sharing resources and increasing awareness of inclusive policies can help women navigate menopause challenges in the workplace.



Menopause-Friendly Work Accommodations

Workplace accommodations can look different depending on the industry, as well as the demands and tasks associated with a person's job. Consider which adjustments might best meet the unique needs of the person's health and job.

Examples of accommodations are listed below, regardless of job demands or industry, and many are simple and/or cost-effective for your company to provide:

- **Extra or frequent breaks** throughout the day with consistent access to restrooms
- **Access to cold water or cooling devices** (fans, cooling vest or other cooling towels, etc.)
- **Flexible uniforms** or adapted dress codes
- **Comfortable workspaces** (adjustable temperature, dedicated rest areas, quiet areas, white noise/sound machines)
- **Broad spectrum or natural lighting**
- **Access to task management tools**
- **Off-camera options** for meetings
- **Designated areas to freshen up**, change clothes, or access sanitary products
- **Flexible work hours**, alternative work schedules, flexible use of leave time, or telework options
- **Individual coaching** or therapy sessions and time off for medical appointments
- **Use of supportive services** and devices (adjustable desk furniture, notetaking support, adaptive tools)
- **Employee assistance programs** or resource groups



Scenario 1

A team of 8 employees are in a meeting using the whiteboard to solve a technical issue that has been plaguing their IT department. Sally has been on the team for over 10 years and has tremendous experience with this system feature. As they begin problem solving, Sally begins to experience a hot flash. She turns red, breaks out in a sweat, and begins to feel very uncomfortable physically. Trying to draw as little attention to herself as possible, she excuses herself and leaves the meeting to cool down. The team continues to problem-solve without her.

Let's discuss!





Scenario 2

Debbie has been a valued employee with the Help Me I'm Lost Company. She operates the Help Desk and is a whiz at problem solving. Recently, she has had to make more frequent bathroom breaks. Debbie is worried that this is going to start impacting her call response quota and isn't sure what she can do about it.

Let's discuss!



Scenario 3

Fido's Empty Food Bowl Company has been making high quality dog food for many years. They pride themselves on finding the best ingredients in the world. Beverley has been working there for the past 3 years and enjoys her job on the assembly line making sure that each bag is properly filled, sealed, and ready for consumption! Lately, she has noticed that when they are bagging their Lamb and Oat product, she suffers from congestion, sneezing, and watery eyes. The initial time it happened, she left work thinking she was coming down with a cold. However, over the next month, she experienced the same allergic reaction with this product.

Let's discuss!





Scenario 4

Sarah works in hospitality and wears a uniform every day. She has been the same uniform size for years but recently has gained weight and nothing seems to help her to lose it. She has tried dieting and increased exercise, yet she is gaining weight in the mid-section. Concerned, she went to her doctor who gave her a clean bill of health. They did mention that it is a common symptom of menopause.

Let's discuss!



Questions?



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