

# Tips for managers: Talking about menopause at work



Talking about the menopause is important.

Normalising conversations about the menopause enables people to ask for help when they need it. Clear and positive conversations help build a good working culture and minimise the negative impact of menopause symptoms for both the individual and the organisation.

Many line managers don't feel confident talking about menopause, but line managers don't need to be menopause experts - they just need to be willing to support.

## Preparing for positive conversations:

- **If you are requesting the meeting, be clear with the staff member about why you want to meet** – This will give them a chance to think beforehand and not feel ambushed.
- **Allow adequate time to have the conversation** – Ensure there will be no urgency to bring the conversation to an end.
- **Organise the meeting space or time in advance so that you can talk somewhere private** where you will not be interrupted.



- **Make sure you are prepared for the meeting** – If your organisation has a menopause policy, make sure that you are familiar with the most up-to-date version.
- **If you are unclear about anything ask for help from HR colleagues** or seek additional information before the meeting.
- **Think ahead. What do you need from the conversation? What do they need?** Are there any particular accommodations that need to be discussed? Consider these ahead of any discussion.

## Holding positive conversations:

- **Encourage staff members to speak openly and honestly.**
- **Don't diagnose symptoms** or make assumptions about what they are experiencing. The menopause affects people in different ways and changes over time.
- **Consider your language** so that there is no confusion.

- **Let them choose how much to disclose** – You only need to know enough information to provide the right levels of support.
- **Ask open questions** and be patient to allow them time to think about their responses, especially if they are struggling with brain fog or memory problems.
- **Be clear about confidentiality** – Discuss directly and make a record of the person's wishes around what they do and do not want people to know.
- **Only offer support that you know you can follow up on.**
- **Keep a record of what has been agreed by employer and employee** – Collect questions for you to take away and commit to reporting back during a following session.
- **Make sure the staff member is clear on the next steps.**



### **Give staff the option to speak to other colleagues**

Employers should give staff the option of talking with someone other than their manager if it makes them feel more comfortable, such as HR or a menopause or wellbeing champion.

## **Why do people find it hard to talk about the menopause at work?**

- The menopause is a private or personal matter.
- It can feel daunting or embarrassing to share symptoms with others.
- Staff members can feel that they don't know their line manager well enough to talk about it.
- Existing negative attitudes in the workplace can make people feel apprehensive to talk about it.
- Staff members are not sure their line managers will be sympathetic.
- Worries about confidentiality.
- Fear of judgement and that colleagues will see them as less able to do their job.
- Concerns that job security or promotion opportunities might be taken away.
- Transgender and non-binary people may find it more challenging to discuss menopause symptoms.

