# PSYCHOLOGY WORKS Fact Sheet: Menopause and the Workplace

## What is Menopause?

Menopause is a natural life transition that marks the end of menstrual cycles and reproductive years. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, although experiences vary widely.

The menopause transition takes place over two major phases: **perimenopause** and **postmenopause**. During perimenopause, menstrual periods may become irregular, with changes in timing and frequency, including missed periods. Postmenopause begins once there has been **12 consecutive months without a menstrual period**. From this point on, the body has fully transitioned out of the reproductive years. Once postmenopause has been reached, this stage remains for the remainder of life.

Perimenopause, in particular, can involve significant **physiological changes**. The ovaries release eggs less regularly and levels of hormones, including estrogen, progesterone, and follicle-stimulating hormone, begin to fluctuate.

These hormonal shifts affect many systems in the body, which is why the menopause transition can involve a range of physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms.

Common symptoms that occur during the menopause transition include:

- **Physical symptoms**: Hot flashes and night sweats, sleep difficulties, fatigue, headaches, joint or muscle pain.
- **Cognitive changes:** Difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, slower information processing.
- **Emotional and psychological changes:** Mood swings, increased irritability, anxiety, low mood or depression.

For a more complete list of potential symptoms, visit the Menopause Foundation of Canada website: https://menopauseessentials.ca/#symptoms

The menopause transition involves significant physiological changes that can affect many aspects of health and well-being. Individuals experiencing challenges during the menopause transition are encouraged to consult a **medical doctor or their primary healthcare provider** to discuss these changes and explore appropriate care options.

## Why Menopause Matters at Work

Perimenopause typically begins between the ages of 40 to 50, a time when many people are well established in their career and may hold senior or leadership positions. Workplace supports and


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interventions can help address menopause-related challenges and create a more supportive work environment.

According to a report by the Menopause Foundation of Canada, up to 95% of those who menstruate experience some menopause symptoms and 32% of those say that these symptoms negatively affect their performance at work.[1] Some examples of how symptoms may affect work performance are:

- **Reduced concentration or memory:** Sleep disruption and hormonal changes can make it harder to focus, remember details, or process information quickly.
- **Fatigue and reduced energy:** Night sweats or insomnia can lead to chronic tiredness, which may affect productivity or motivation.
- **Increased stress:** Balancing symptoms with job responsibilities can increase stress, particularly in demanding work environments.
- **Confidence and self-perception:** Some women report feeling less confident at work if symptoms affect their performance or if they worry about how colleagues may perceive them.
- **Workplace stigma:** Because menopause is rarely discussed openly, employees may feel embarrassed or reluctant to seek help or accommodations.

## How Can Workplaces Help?

Menopause has historically been overlooked or treated as a private issue rather than a workplace topic. As a result, many of those experiencing symptoms caused by the transition to menopause do not feel comfortable discussing menopause at work, even when symptoms affect their job performance or wellbeing (see Footnote 1).

On the other hand, supportive workplaces can make a significant difference for employees experiencing menopause. Even small changes can improve wellbeing and productivity. A workplace culture where menopause can be discussed with supervisors and Human Resources personnel can lead to employees addressing their needs, thus allowing for a more comfortable and effective work environment.

Research on healthy workplaces highlights several effective strategies: [2,3]

### Encourage open conversations

Creating a workplace culture where health issues can be discussed without stigma helps employees feel comfortable seeking support. Employers can:

- Provide education about menopause

[1] Menopause Foundation of Canada. (2023). *Menopause and work in Canada.* https://menopausefoundationcanada.ca/pdf_files/Menopause_Work_Canada_2023EN.pdf

[2] Safwan, N., Saadedine, M., Shufelt, C. L., Kapoor, E., Kling, J. M., Chaudhry, R., & Faubion, S. S. (2024). Menopause in the workplace: Challenges, impact, and next steps. *Maturitas, 185*, Article 107983. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2024.107983

[3] CIPD. (2023). *Menopause in the workplace: Employee experiences in 2023*. https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/2023-pdfs/2023-menopause-report-8456.pdf


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- Include menopause in workplace wellness programs
- Train managers to respond with empathy and understanding

### Provide flexibility when possible

Flexible work arrangements can help employees manage symptoms such as fatigue or poor sleep. Options might include flexible start and end times, temporary workload adjustments, or opportunities to work from home when appropriate.

### Improve the physical work environment

Certain workplace adjustments may help employees manage symptoms such as hot flashes or fatigue. Examples include access to fans or temperature control, quiet spaces for short breaks, and comfortable dress policies.

### Train managers and supervisors

Managers play a key role in creating supportive environments. Training can help supervisors:

- Understand menopause and its potential impacts
- Respond respectfully to employee concerns
- Identify practical workplace accommodations

Supportive leadership is one of the strongest predictors of employee wellbeing.

If formal support structures are not present in the workplace, employees should create informal support structures to help them cope with the practical impact of menopause symptoms on employment outcomes.[4]

## How Can Psychology Help?

Psychological support can play an important role in managing menopause-related challenges. Psychological research suggests that:

- Stress and anxiety can worsen certain menopause symptoms.[5]
- Supportive environments can improve wellbeing and work performance (see Footnote 2).
- Psychological strategies can help individuals manage symptoms and maintain confidence.[6]

Psychologists can help both individuals and workplaces respond more effectively to menopause-related challenges. **Psychological strategies** that may help individuals include:

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[4] Steffan, B., & Potočnik, K. (2023). Thinking outside Pandora's box: Revealing differential effects of coping with physical and psychological menopause symptoms at work. *Human Relations, 76*(8), 1191-1225. https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267221089469

[5] Freeman, E. W., Sammel, M. D., Lin, H., Gracia, C. R., Kapoor, S., & Ferdousi, T. (2005). The role of anxiety and hormonal changes in menopausal hot flashes. *Menopause, 12*(3), 258–266. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.gme.0000142440.49698.b7

[6] Rukure, H., & Husted, M. (2025). Cognitive behavioural therapy for menopausal symptoms: A systematic review of efficacy in improving quality of life. *BMC Women's Health*, *26*, Article 58. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-025-04142-y


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### Managing stress

Stress can intensify many menopause symptoms, including sleep problems and mood changes. Psychological approaches that may help include:

- Mindfulness and relaxation techniques
- Cognitive-behavioural strategies for managing stress
- Time-management and workload strategies

### Improving sleep

Sleep disruption is one of the most common menopause symptoms and can affect concentration, mood, and energy levels. Psychological treatments such as **cognitive-behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBT-I)** can help people develop healthy sleep routines, manage thoughts that interfere with sleep, and improve overall sleep quality. Better sleep can significantly improve daily functioning and workplace performance.

### Supporting emotional wellbeing

Hormonal changes and life stressors can contribute to anxiety or low mood during menopause. Psychologists can help individuals develop coping strategies, address negative thinking patterns, and build skills to help manage emotional challenges.

### Strengthening confidence at work

If symptoms affect concentration, memory, or energy levels, individuals may worry about how they are perceived at work. Psychological support can help people:

- Maintain confidence in their professional abilities
- Develop practical strategies to manage work tasks
- Communicate effectively about their needs

**Psychologists can also support organizations** by providing workplace education and training, developing wellbeing programs, and advising on policies that promote healthy and inclusive workplaces.

Psychological support is one part of menopause care. Other approaches to help manage symptoms may include menopause hormone therapy and nonhormonal medications, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs). To learn more about treatment options and determine what may be appropriate for their circumstances, individuals are encouraged to consult their primary healthcare provider.

## Helpful Resource:

The Menopause Foundation of Canada offers a free resource to help workplaces become menopause inclusive, to learn more about this resource and other initiatives, visit their website: https://menopausefoundationcanada.ca/resources/menopause-inclusive-workplace/


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**You can consult with a registered psychologist** to find out if psychological interventions might be of help to you. Provincial, territorial, and some municipal associations of psychology may make available a referral list of practicing psychologists that can be searched for appropriate services. For the names and coordinates of provincial and territorial associations of psychology, go to https://cpa.ca/public/whatisapsychologist/PTassociations/.

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Your opinion matters! Please contact us with any questions or comments about any of the **PSYCHOLOGY WORKS** Fact Sheets: factsheets@cpa.ca

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