



Menopause-savvy conversations for line managers and supervisors

Wait for employees to self-identify as experiencing menopausal symptoms

For you to bring it up might be viewed as confronting and offensive. However, if you observe an employee displaying symptoms such as hot flushes, you might want to use that as an opening to a conversation. For example, *I noticed that you seemed to be a bit flushed during that meeting – is there anything I can help with to make you a bit more comfortable?*

Prepare for a positive experience during initial disclosure

A positive mindset and approach are central for managers and supervisors to create supportive experiences for subordinates who raise menopause. When an employee talks about menopause, ensure you communicate that it is not a problem for either yourself or the organization. It's also ok not to have all the answers during your first conversation, but simply to re-assure.

Work collaboratively with others as required

Be aware that discussing menopause is difficult due to some (unfair) stigmas around reproductive stages. If an employee chooses to raise it with another line manager or supervisor, work collaboratively with that manager rather than question why they may have not gone through formal hierarchical channels.

Offer support

Support can come in a number of different forms: some employees may just want an empathic ear, while others may want something more formal. Make sure that you have the time and the space for a confidential and systematic discussion that allows the opportunity to raise concerns, worries and steps forward. Try to ensure you leave the conversation knowing what are the next steps (if any).

Develop a working plan

Menopause is a unique experience and each employee may need different forms of support. It is useful to get an idea of what the employee feels they might require to improve their symptoms at work.

Review the plan and support arrangements regularly

Once menopausal transition has been discussed, remember to keep the conversation open periodically. The effects of menopausal transition can change over time, so support mechanisms may need to change to accommodate this.

Self-reflect to improve delivery

It might be that after these conversations, you yourself need space to debrief. Make sure you have an opportunity to reflect on your own reactions and responses either by yourself or with a colleague without compromising the privacy of your employee.

THINGS TO AVOID

Be aware of saying anything that could be interpreted as one of the 3 D's:

- Derisory (problematizing or shaming)
- Dismissive (not listening or explaining away their experiences)
- Discriminatory (connecting menopause to negative ascriptions or judgements about their behaviour or performance)

POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY

- Thank you for letting me know, I'm confident we can work through any work concerns you have together
- In what ways can I support you?
- Don't worry about anyone else finding out if you want it to remain confidential
- I might have to consult with HR/OHS/ senior manager to find out what our options are. Is that ok?
- You're important to the team so I want to make sure you continue to want to work with us

NEGATIVE THINGS TO SAY

- I feel very uncomfortable about this, could you not just talk to someone else?
- Is this an excuse for poor performance?
- I can't help you with this...It's not my job to sort out these issues
- I/my wife didn't have any problems with menopause
- Have you thought about retirement or moving jobs to somewhere that is easier?