



canada *life*™

## Creating a menopause- friendly workplace

### Information you need to have supportive conversations with your employees

By 2025 more than 5 million Canadians will be perimenopausal, many of them in the workforce, but is your workplace ready? Perimenopause symptoms can sometimes make work difficult or uncomfortable. Many people feel shame or embarrassment and suffer silently. This can get in the way of a person rising to a peak in their career and may even force them to leave. Knowing more about the experience can prepare you to respond well.

## Did you know menopause doesn't always happen at a certain age?

A person is said to have entered menopause when they've gone 12 months since their last period. This can happen with age but can also happen if a person has had their ovaries removed. The time leading up to menopause is called perimenopause or the menopausal transition. This is when a person may experience multiple irregular periods, hot flashes and trouble sleeping. The menopausal transition most often begins between ages 45 and 55. On average it lasts 7-10 years but can last as long as 14 years! Every day after menopause is called postmenopause. This final stage lasts for the rest of a person's life and can also have symptoms.

### Symptoms of perimenopause<sup>1</sup>

There are numerous symptoms that can negatively impact a person's physical and mental health as they move through perimenopause to postmenopause.

- **Anxiety:** Feeling nervous, stressed, tense or panicked
- **Hot flashes and/or night sweats:** Sudden, intense heat over areas of the body
- **Changes in cognitive ability:** Memory problems, hard to concentrate, brain fog
- **Fatigue:** Feeling tired or having low energy
- **Depression:** Feeling overwhelmed, unhappy, loss of interest in many things
- **Headaches and migraines that are worse than usual:** Pressure or tightness in the head, nausea, sensitivity to light or noise
- **Body aches:** Muscle and joint pain
- **Heart palpitations:** Racing heartbeat



For more information about symptoms, treatment and helpful lifestyle habits, search for menopause on the Health Connected website. You can access the site through My Canada Life at Work in the Wellness section of the Resources tab.

## What may help

Consider asking your employee, “What’s getting in the way of you doing your best, and how can we help?” Often the most helpful supports are part of the best practices of a good employer. The chart below lists some ways you can make your workplace more menopause-friendly.

Flexibility	Open and supportive workspaces	Benefit plan support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work-from-home options – employees can feel more comfortable with their own washroom facilities and thermostat, access to cold drinking water and a change of clothes.</li><li>• Flexible hours, such as earlier start times or compressed hours to work around the effects of poor sleep or make time for extra medical appointments.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information on the menopause transition available on your intranet.</li><li>• Uniforms that are comfortable for different body temperatures.</li><li>• Workspaces that can accommodate a need to have a desk fan or be close to a window that opens.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to an employee assistance program (EAP) with programs for smoking cessation, physical activity and stress management counselling.</li><li>• A health plan that provides access to advice from a dietician and a drug plan that covers hormone therapy medications.</li><li>• A health care spending account or wellness account that offers coverage flexibility for individual needs.</li><li>• Access to a virtual health care service to answer non-urgent medical concerns, provide advice and write prescriptions without having to leave home or work.</li></ul>



## The takeaway

Perimenopause directly impacts many Canadians, and the symptoms can be challenging to manage at work. It can also feel scary to speak out and ask for accommodation. You don’t have to lose talented members of your workforce or let them struggle silently. You can support your employees through their menopausal years with open communication, flexible work policies and a benefit plan that helps them manage their specific health concerns.

<sup>1</sup><https://menopausefoundationcanada.ca/>