

## Menopause in the Workplace

Talking about the perimenopause and menopause means that we are raising awareness and helping to empower women to take control of their menopause. Openly talking about the menopause at work also helps provides women and their employers with the support they need during this time and hopefully starts to break down barriers that may be in place to help teams to start to talk about this taboo subject.

### Why is this important?

Perimenopausal and Menopausal women are the fastest growing workforce demographic in the UK. Did you know following statistics?

- Almost 8 out of 10 of menopausal women are in work.
- One in three women in the workforce will soon be over 50 as retirement age in the UK is being pushed back. This means these women can still be expected to work for at least 15 years past their menopause.
- 3 out of 4 women experience symptoms of the menopause, 1 in 4 women experience severe symptoms and 4 out of 5 women believe thier symptoms impact in their ability to work at their best.
- 2 out of 5 women pass up the opportunity of promotion or actually leave their roles as the don't feel physically or mentally well enough for the challenge of working when they are perimenopausal or menopausal.

In this country millions of pounds is lost due to very experienced and skilled women leaving, retiring or being out of work due to their symptoms.

### How can menopause impact ladies at work?

As mentioned, all women have a different experience of the menopause, physically and emotionally.

- Hot flushes can happen at work, especially in meetings and presentations.
- Headaches can affect concentration.
- Insomnia and Poor sleep can impact on performance, memory and concentration.
- Erratic and heavy periods can lead to frequent toilet trips or even flooding.
- Anxiety over performance and ability.
- Low mood affecting working relationships.
- Lack of confidence meaning reluctance to apply for promotion.
- Poor concentration meaning things get missed.

In the past, there has been a reluctance in society and within workplaces to discuss the issues women may face but this is changing which is great. Workplaces and leaders within organisations are starting to pro actively educate and empower women and their colleagues about what support there is available and this will lead to the changes needed.

### How can organisations help their staff?

There are some very practical ways employers can support staff, these include:

- Providing fans for desks,
- Giving ladies the desk nearest the window.
- Allowing flexible working.
- Allowing home working.
- Setting up a 'menopause working group' or providing staff with a menopause ambassador who can provide support, advice and advocacy services if needed.

As a Private GP & Menopause Specialist, I work with a number of organisations to support them with their legal obligations around the menopause at work as set out by the Equality Act of 2010 and Health and Safety Act of 1974. These include:

- Putting training in place with women and line managers so that they understand how the perimenopause and menopause affects women, especially at work.
- Providing advice and education around the medical treatment options available for symptoms a woman may be experiencing and ensuring this is evidence based, safe and effective.
- Developing company-wide policy or supporting policy development to ensure it's compliant, equitable and well-publicised.
- As part of a well being package, I can provide access to a responsive Menopause Service to ensure women get timely help when needed but that absence is minimised and the workforce remains engaged.