



RETIREMENT RESEARCH & INSIGHTS

Break through the stigma: Menopause in the workplace

A checklist to help women navigate their menopause journey

Approximately 1.3 million women in the U.S. will enter menopause each year¹ and 20% of the workforce are in some phase of menopause transition,² yet the word “menopause” is rarely uttered, and seldom heard, especially in the workplace.

With 60% of women saying that menopause is generally stigmatized, the topic is felt to be “too personal” or “taboo” to talk about at work, and women continue to suffer in silence as they try to simultaneously manage menopause symptoms and their careers.

Bank of America, in partnership with the National Menopause Foundation, wants women to know they’re not alone on their menopause journey. Together, we are working to break through the stigma by championing a broader conversation on menopause. We recently talked to working women and HR benefit managers about perceptions of menopause in the workplace, the impact it has on professional and personal life and what actions help to create a more supportive culture. And we are using insights from those discussions to develop and share strategies to help women manage through menopause and address the changes and challenges it brings.

Consider the following tips and suggested actions to help initiate important discussions, communicate about your needs and identify menopause-specific resources.

“It’s a stage of life that will be experienced, so why not meet it head-on?”

— Female survey respondent, age 52

Source for all stats, unless otherwise noted: Bank of America, *Break through the stigma: Menopause in the workplace*, May 2023.

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Tips to help you thrive during menopause¹

- ▶ **Gain a better understanding of menopause.** Menopause is the final menstrual period, confirmed after 12 consecutive months without a period, marking the permanent end of menstruation and fertility. It is a normal, natural event in a woman's life. Women overwhelmingly consider menopause more a life stage (89%) than a medical issue (11%).
- ▶ **Know the symptoms.** Use this [menopause symptom checklist](#) to track your symptoms and use as a resource when talking with your health care professional.
- ▶ **Strive for good nutrition.** Focus on eating nutrient-rich foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and lean proteins.
- ▶ **Maintain good sleep habits.** Avoid nicotine, caffeine and alcohol in the late afternoon and evening. Also consider keeping your bedroom temperature comfortably cool, and dress in lightweight or moisture-wicking pajamas.
- ▶ **Manage hot flashes as best you can.** Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and stay away from specific foods or drinks that trigger or worsen your hot flashes (e.g., spicy foods, caffeinated drinks).
- ▶ **Stay physically active.** Physical activity can help support bone, heart and mental health, so find and focus on an activity that you enjoy—whether it's walking, gardening, dancing or going to the gym.
- ▶ **Find a peer support group.** Whether online, through work, or by getting together with friends, identify a support group that provides the opportunity to connect and engage with a community of women to share experiences, concerns, information and inspiration about this stage of life.
- ▶ **Talk to your employer.** If you feel menopause is affecting your work life, discuss your concerns with your employer and ask about the availability of menopause-specific benefits.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are **more than 30 known symptoms** of menopause. Women report experiencing an average of 9 symptoms, including:

- Hot flashes (65%)
- Night sweats (63%)
- Sleep disturbance (52%)
- Weight gain (51%)
- Fatigue (46%)



Tips to help you have menopause conversations

Although 51% of peri- and post-menopausal working women report that menopause has had a negative impact on their work life, 58% of women in this life stage say they don't feel comfortable discussing their menopause symptoms at work, primarily because it's too personal. But having these conversations can open doors to support you may not know is there and may even help advocate for additional benefits and resources. The following tips can help guide those conversations.

Employer conversations:

- ❑ **Ask your employer about menopause-specific benefits.** Check your company's intranet or benefits resource center. If you don't find anything specifically discussing menopause, consult your Human Resources representative. You can initiate a conversation by asking, "Is there a written menopause policy?"
- ❑ **Set up time and a private place to talk to your manager.** Scheduling a meeting instead of just stopping by will signal that what you want to talk about is important and show that it's more than a casual conversation.
- ❑ **Prepare for the conversation.** Write down what you want to share with your manager during the meeting. Explain clearly how menopause symptoms you've experienced are affecting you, and what reasonable adjustments may minimize their impact (e.g., remote work, flexible schedule, etc.).
- ❑ **Keep the conversation focused on positive outcomes.** Stress how supporting you and other women in the organization going through this life stage can positively impact the work environment, as women who have access to menopause-specific benefits say that they help them bring their best selves to work and feel more connected to their company.
- ❑ **Suggest specific actions.** If your company doesn't offer menopause-specific benefits, ask your manager to raise the topic at the next corporate benefits meeting to start the process to add them.
- ❑ **Schedule a follow-up meeting.** While your manager may need time to think about your request and connect with HR, putting a follow-up meeting on the calendar will help ensure the topic remains a priority and next steps are considered.

DID YOU KNOW?

Two-thirds of women say they **want some kind of menopause-related benefits** including:

- Menopause policy
- Hormone replacement therapy covered by health insurance
- Access to menopause health professionals
- Menopause awareness sessions
- Lifestyle spending accounts with approved use for menopause-related services
- Cooling rooms



Health care provider conversations:¹

- ❑ **Prepare for your appointment.** Make a list of your concerns and questions, as well as medications and over-the-counter products you're taking, including vitamins and supplements.
- ❑ **Complete the [menopause symptom checklist](#).** Bring a copy of the checklist to share with your health care provider and be ready to talk about how the symptoms may be impacting your home and work life.
- ❑ **Bring a family member or friend.** If it helps you feel more comfortable, enlist the support of someone you trust.
- ❑ **Don't feel embarrassed or rushed.** Ask questions if you don't understand something and request that your provider repeat or write down the information as needed.
- ❑ **Seek out specialized care.** If you want more information and recommendations to help you on your menopause journey, ask for a referral to a health professional who specializes in menopause and women's health issues.

RESOURCES

[National Menopause Foundation](#)³

Access the menopause symptoms checklist, education and resources, and an online support group.

[The Menopause Metamorphosis](#)³

Safe and secure online peer support community where you can connect and engage with other women to share experiences, concerns, information and inspiration.

[North American Menopause Society](#)³

Find a menopause practitioner.

WHY IT MATTERS

Menopause takes a physical and emotional toll on women as they simultaneously try to manage their symptoms, careers and personal lives. By talking about it with your family, friends, employer and health care provider, you can break the stigma around menopause while getting the support you need to help you navigate your menopause journey. Having these conversations, seeking out help and advocating for more support can also help pave the way for greater understanding and care for the next generation of women.

¹ National Menopause Foundation.

² Letstalkmenopause.org, as of April 2023.

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