Menopause In the Workplace

Menopause is a natural hormonal transition that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years. Often there are physical and emotional changes, including hot flashes, night sweats, fatigue, anxiety, mood swings, concentration issues, and memory lapses that may adversely impact productivity in the workplace. Employers and colleagues should be aware of potential effects and offer a supportive environment.

Need for Accommodations and Flexibility

- **Menopause.** The cessation of menstruation is a natural consequence of aging, so shouldn't be considered a disability. Early menopause may occur following surgical removal of the reproductive organ or medical treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation; menopause under this circumstance may qualify as an impairment eligible for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- In either instance, acknowledging workers' needs and providing some accommodations can go a long way in creating a favorable work environment.
- Sharing with HR departments and employers the impact that menopausal symptoms can have — they are uncomfortable, uncontrollable, and unpredictable — will go a long way to gaining support for individuals as they are faced with this life transition.
- Recognizing the value that simple accommodations can provide in the work environment will be increasingly important as the work force ages.

Accommodations to Advocate For:

- **Temperature control**. Provide fans or air conditioning in individual offices, redirecting air conditioning vents or maintaining ventilation systems helps regulate body temperature.
- **Dress code**. Consider that work attire should allow for layering or accommodate for sleeveless tops or a selection of uniforms that provide maximum breathability.
- **Work schedules.** Offer flexible times such as the ability to change shifts, work from home, especially during a heat wave, or accommodations to allow for time off.
- **Break area.** Provide access to quiet rooms where employees are able to refresh themselves following a severe hot flash or when symptoms flare.
- **Resources.** Provide information about the impact that menopause can have, including links to online or in-person education courses, community support groups, and directories of menopause care providers.
- **Training.** Provide online or in-person programs to managers/program leaders and staff on menopause awareness to promote understanding and empathy, as well as provide support to demonstrate a commitment to an inclusive environment with support for team-building.

Source: Korn Ferry. Unveiling the Impact of Menopause in the Workplace.

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American Medical Women's Association