

Menopause standard launched to help organisations support experienced workers

2 years ago



New guidance designed to help organisations support employees experiencing menopause or menstruation and better enable them to retain experienced and talented people of all ages has been published by BSI.

BSI, the UK National Standards Body, today publishes the menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace standard (BS 30416), following extensive consultation with experts and the public. It sets out practical recommendations for workplace adjustments, as well as strategies to sit alongside existing well-being initiatives, to help organizations meet the needs of employees experiencing menopause or menstruation.

The guidance is designed to enable organizations to prioritize the needs of colleagues and to tackle the potential loss of skilled workers, who may be at their career peak. It follows Fawcett Society research suggesting an estimated 10% of women experiencing menopause have left the workforce due to their symptoms, which can range from hot flushes to dizziness, insomnia, muscle and joint stiffness, going up to 25% for those with more severe symptoms.

Global menopause productivity losses are estimated to already top \$150 billion a year. BSI gathered a panel of experts to develop the standard, recognizing that this situation is set to grow as greater numbers of women stay in the workforce for longer. Estimates suggest that by 2025, there could be more than 1 billion people experiencing menopause globally – 12% of the world population.

BS 30416 has been developed to help organizations identify misconceptions around menstruation and peri/menopause and the impact a taboo surrounding them can have on workplace support. It was developed with input from large businesses including Wm Morrison and BT, as well as representatives from UNISON, Federation of Small Businesses, LGBT Foundation, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, Daisy Network, Endometriosis UK, and included a public consultation period.

The standard aims to provide examples of good practices for employers, including policy guidance, work design, workplace culture, and physical aspects of work. Steps to consider include:

1. Considering the workplace culture to determine whether there is a general awareness of menstruation and menopause and whether employees are given opportunities for open conversations or to request support.
2. Looking at whether line managers and HR managers are suitably trained or receive suitable resources to understand the potential impact of menstruation and menopause.
3. Reviewing if the workplace environment is properly controlled and if there are facilities such as toilets or discrete changing rooms, or quiet recovery spaces easily accessible.
4. Checking whether the relevant policies (well-being, D&I, performance management, sickness and absences, flexible working, etc.) consider menstruation and menopause.
5. Looking at whether work designs enable some flexibility for an individual approach. Aspects could include scheduling, timings of breaks, comfort adjustments such as access to individual cooling or heating, and opportunities for sitting or stretching.

The guidance is designed to be flexible, acknowledging that experiences of menstruation and menopause vary significantly and not everyone will want support from their employers.

Anne Hayes, Director of Sectors, BSI, said: "I am proud BSI is publishing this landmark guidance on Menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace, to help employers retain talented people whatever stage of life they are in. Organizations which prioritize their people by building an inclusive workplace will be best placed to continue to thrive in the future."

"There is no one-size-fits-all experience of menopause, but the data suggests thousands of women are leaving the workforce at this stage, contributing to significant productivity losses, robbing organizations of talented people, and removing mentors who can draw on their experience to support newer members of staff. It doesn't have to be that way."

"Many employers want to better support people experiencing menstruation and menopause, but they may face a lack of knowledge of how to do so. The recommendations are designed to address some of the broad challenges and offer practical adjustments to help all colleagues continue to feel valued, motivated and able to remain in the workforce for longer."

Helen Tomlinson, Menopause Employment Champion for the UK Government, said: "I am truly delighted that the BSI have produced the Menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace standard, recognising the challenges, symptoms and experiences of both menopause & menstrual health and how these can affect women in the workplace. It's a free resource for any organisation, large or small across all sectors, to be able to utilise. This will go a long way to ensure that everyone can receive the support they need at this critical time."

“I firmly believe this transition isn’t a time to step back, step down or step out. If we get this right for 50 per cent of the population that we need in the workplace from an economic and experience perspective it has the potential to make the final 10,15 or 20 years of a woman’s career the most productive, exciting and meaningful.”

BSI will be celebrating [the launch of the standard](#) at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on 5th July 2023, when Alice Smellie and Mariella Frostrup will join panel experts who developed the standard to share their views and experiences, as well as to offer practical tips and tools on implementing this guidance within business environments.

For BS 30416, the aim has been to produce an inclusive standard, with wide relevance and application, that uses non-stigmatising terminology. All perspectives have been considered in this light.