

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Menopause The Next Frontier in Employee Benefits

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Why has menopause become such a hot topic for employers? For starters, **almost a third of today's workforce is comprised of menopause-aged women*** (women between the ages of 45-55 years old).¹ While menopause is usually associated with symptoms of hot flashes and brain fog, there are several other symptoms that people may experience, including difficulty sleeping and mood changes.

Why Should Employers Care?

Menopause is a natural part of aging but the symptoms associated can be difficult and impact not only quality of life but also job performance, productivity and someone's desire to remain at a company. In fact, 20% of people experiencing menopause have quit or considered leaving a job due to their menopause symptoms², while 40% have reported their work performance and productivity are negatively impacted.³ Employer support for individuals experiencing menopause should be considered essential to providing equitable and inclusive benefits. Therefore, to attract and retain talent, and to provide a comfortable and productive work environment for their employees, employers are adding menopause support to their overall benefits strategies. In 2024, 12% of large employers will offer a program to support employees going through menopause.⁴

Some immediate actions that employers can take to support individuals experiencing menopausal symptoms include:

- 1 Awareness & Education.** The first step to supporting employees experiencing menopause in the workplace is awareness and education. Menopause can be a taboo topic to discuss, especially among colleagues. Reducing the stigma and raising awareness through supervisor training and dedicated employee resource groups is a good first step. Placing women and those experiencing menopause symptoms at the forefront of these conversations and inviting their input on the current work environment can help support inclusivity and open communication.

**Note: usage of "women" in this article is intended to be inclusive of any individual who experiences menopause symptoms, regardless of gender identity.*



2 Policies & Programs. Employers should consider the needs of menopausal employees as they design their policies and benefits programs. Because each individual experiences menopause differently, policies such as flexible worksite location and paid time off can allow employees to accommodate the myriad of symptoms that they may experience. If employees work onsite, consider the physical environment in which they work. Look to answer questions such as: Are there fans or other ways of adjusting the temperature? Are work-required uniforms made of a comfortable, breathable material? Minor changes like these can make a substantial difference in alleviating certain menopause symptoms.

3 Preventive Care. Menopause is deeply connected to a person's broader health. Comorbidities such as obesity, musculoskeletal conditions and cancer can significantly impact how an individual experiences menopause. In one Brown & Brown customer example, the prevalence of obesity doubled once women reached menopausal age, and the prevalence of musculoskeletal conditions increased by more than 60%.⁵ Promoting, and in some cases, incentivizing, preventive care throughout employees' lifespans can reduce the prevalence and severity of comorbid conditions, and therefore lead to improved experiences with menopause.

Outside of these more immediate actions, some employers are working with vendors to support their employees experiencing menopause symptoms. The landscape of menopause-focused solutions continues to grow, with offerings that can suit a wide variety of employer initiatives. These solutions range from online menopause education resources to virtual women's health clinics with menopause specialists and on-staff dietitians. Many of the clinically focused vendors include holistic support for a variety of menopause comorbidities, including behavioral health, musculoskeletal conditions and metabolic health.

It is worth noting that many employers may already have some menopause resources built into their existing programs and vendor relationships. Promotion of resources that already exist in the benefits program, such as those included through the health plan or employee assistance program, can be a simple, affordable way for employers to connect people with the resources they need. Additionally, multiple menopause-focused vendors have providers who are already in-network with national carriers. Employers should explore vendors with menopause specialists who are already included in their current network, and communicate this availability, to increase awareness and utilization of accessible providers.

As the representation of women in the workforce continues to grow, employers should anticipate that this topic will only become more relevant and top of mind for the workforce. As menopause continues to become destigmatized, more and more employees will likely come to expect work cultures, programs and benefits that support those experiencing menopausal symptoms. This is not just a trend, but a topic of importance that is here to stay.

Sources

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