Phase Partnership

A FREE GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

Menopause at Work: A Plain English Guide for Employers

What the new rules and the new international standard actually mean, whatever the size of your organisation.

Employment Rights Act 2025

ISO 45010, September 2026

The Phase Partnership

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If you have tried to read the government guidance on Menopause Action Plans, or heard about the new ISO standard on menstruation and menopause and wondered whether it applies to you, and come away no clearer than when you started, you are not alone.

It is written for people who already work in HR policy, not for the person actually running a business or a team. I work with organisations on exactly this, so I have translated it here in plain English, whatever size your organisation is and whether or not a reporting duty applies to you.

Two things are changing right now

The Employment Rights Act 2025

Introduced a duty for large employers to publish Equality Action Plans alongside their gender pay gap data.

From April 2026, employers with 250 or more staff are encouraged to publish a plan voluntarily. From spring 2027, publication becomes mandatory, subject to secondary legislation still being finalised. First compulsory plans are due by April 2028.

Each plan needs at least two actions: one on the gender pay gap, one on menopause support, with at least two actions overall being new or already in progress. The menopause action can be extended to cover related conditions such as endometriosis or PCOS if an organisation chooses to, though this is not a requirement.

ISO 45010

Published 7 September 2026, this is the world's first international standard on supporting menstruation and menopause at work, treated throughout as one continuous topic rather than two separate issues.

Unlike the Equality Action Plan duty, there is no 250-employee threshold. It is written for organisations of any size and sector, including small and medium businesses, and it is free to access.

It is guidance rather than law, but it sets out, in one place, what good practice now looks like for both.

Whether or not your organisation ever has to publish a formal plan, what counts as reasonable workplace support is being defined right now, and it is being defined for everyone, not just large employers.

THE SIZE QUESTION

If you are under 250 employees, this still concerns you

The 250-employee threshold decides who has to publish an Equality Action Plan. It does not decide who can be held to account if they get this wrong, and it has no bearing on ISO 45010 at all, which was written with smaller organisations in mind from the outset.

> THE POINT THAT GETS MISSED
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> The Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 already apply to every employer, whatever the size. Tribunal awards for discrimination are uncapped. Where menopause symptoms are severe or long-lasting, reasonable adjustments are not optional, regardless of headcount.
>
> Not having to report on it is not the same as not being liable for it.

The six government actions, translated

The government has published a list of evidence-informed actions organisations can choose from for their Equality Action Plan. Six of them are specifically about menopause support, since that is what the Act itself requires, and every one of them fits comfortably within what ISO 45010 also recommends, whether or not you are the size of organisation the Act applies to. ISO 45010 goes further and treats menstruation and menopause as one continuous topic, so most of what follows applies equally to supporting someone managing heavy periods, endometriosis or PCOS, even though the Act does not currently require it. Here is what each one actually looks like in practice.

01 Train your managers

This means proper training, not a slide deck sent round by email, and it is specifically about training managers, not the whole workforce, though wider staff awareness is worth building in anyway. Managers should come away understanding how symptoms actually show up at work, how to have a private and unhurried conversation with someone who raises it, and what support and adjustments already exist. Government research behind this guidance found that most managers have had no training at all in this area, which is exactly why so many women say they hide the real reason for time off.

02 Offer occupational health advice

This does not require an in-house team. It means employees experiencing menopause have somewhere confidential to go, whether that is an internal occupational health service or an external one, to talk through how their symptoms and their work are affecting each other and get practical advice.

03 Set up a support network or group

This can be far simpler than it sounds. It does not need a committee or a budget. A regular informal get-together, or even a private channel where people can ask questions and compare notes, meets the intention. The point is reducing isolation, since most employees currently have no idea whether anything like this exists where they work.

04 Offer workplace adjustments

The practical list is usually short: flexible hours, a fan or better temperature control, breathable uniform options, somewhere private to take a break, and a manager who responds to a request within a reasonable time rather than letting it drift. Agreed changes are worth writing down and revisiting, since symptoms change over time.

05 Carry out a menopause risk assessment

This sounds bigger than it is. For a smaller organisation, a line manager can walk through it directly: is it too hot, is there access to cold water, are toilets and rest areas close by, do staff know flexible working is available to them. For a larger one, it usually sits with HR or health and safety. Either way, it is a straightforward audit, not a major project.

06 Review your policies

This means checking that flexible working, adjustments and leave policies actually name menopause rather than leaving employees to work out whether they apply. Some organisations choose to go further with a standalone menopause policy. Either way, the review is worth doing with input from people who are actually going through it, not written in isolation by HR.

What about the men in your workforce

The legislation and the government guidance are specifically about menopause, and rightly so. But almost every organisation I work with is also managing andropause in the same workforce at the same time, usually without anyone naming it. The symptoms look different: flatness rather than hot flushes, withdrawal rather than visible distress, but the effect on someone's working life and the people around them is just as real.

There is no reporting duty attached to this. It is simply a genuine gap, and one I build into every workplace session I run, covering both sides of what midlife hormonal change actually looks like across a team rather than treating it as a women's issue alone.

Where to start

There is no single fixed package that fits every organisation, because no two workforces are experiencing this in the same way. Every organisation I work with starts with a free Complimentary Introduction Session, so we can talk through what is actually happening where you are before anything is recommended. From there, the options range from a single Lunchtime Awareness session through to Manager and HR Training, Menopause Champion Training, and the full Menopause and Andropause Workplace Programme, combined to match your priorities, your timeframe and your budget.

If you would like to talk through where your organisation currently sits, or which of the six actions above would make the most sense to start with, I would be glad to have that conversation.

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GET IN TOUCH

Let's talk about your workforce

Every organisation I work with starts the same way, with a conversation about what is actually happening for the people in it, not a package pulled off a shelf. If any of this guide has been useful, or has raised more questions than it answered, I would be glad to help.

A note on what this guide is. This is general information correct at the time of writing, not legal advice. For formal compliance with the Employment Rights Act 2025, ISO 45010, or any other legislation or standard, please seek advice from a qualified employment solicitor. As a Functional Wellness Practitioner, I do not diagnose or prescribe, and I work alongside existing GP and occupational health provision rather than in place of it.

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