

# Employers could be sued if 'reasonable adjustments' for menopausal women not made

Employers could be sued if they do not make "reasonable adjustments" for menopausal women in the workplace, the equalities watchdog has said.

New guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) clarifies employers' legal obligations to menopausal women and encourages them to "adapt their policies and practices accordingly".

It recommends that bosses consider things such as room temperature and ventilation as well as providing rest areas or quiet rooms for women experiencing hot flushes.

Flexible working should be considered, including being allowed to work from home, and start and finish times should be varied if a woman has had a bad night's sleep or on a warmer day, the guidance recommends.

Relaxing uniform policies or allowing menopausal women to wear cooler clothes as well as providing fans could also be a way of helping them, according to the EHRC.

Research showed that one in 10 women who have worked during [menopause](#) have left their jobs due to symptoms, the EHRC said.

Two-thirds of working women between the ages of 40 and 60 with experience of menopausal symptoms said they have had a largely negative impact on them at work, studies have also found.

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The [NHS](#) says that menopause typically affects women between the ages of 45 and 55, but it can happen earlier.

It can cause both physical and psychological symptoms such as anxiety, mood swings, brain fog, hot flushes and irregular periods. These symptoms can last for months or years, and can change with time, the NHS guidance says.

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If companies fail to make the suggested “reasonable adjustments” they could be liable for disability discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 if an individual’s symptoms have a “long-term and substantial impact” on their ability to carry out their usual day-to-day activities, the EHRC said.

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The EHRC guidance added that taking disciplinary action against a woman because of menopause-related absence from work could amount to unlawful discrimination unless it is justified.

Using language that ridicules someone because of their menopausal symptoms could also be harassment, the commission said.

Uniform policies that disadvantage women with menopause symptoms could also amount to indirect sex, age or disability discrimination, the watchdog also warned.

Mims Davies, the government minister for disabled people, health and work, said the guidance is “vital for the progression of women in the workforce, it’s vital for the growth of our economy”.

She said the number of women in work is at a “record high” with two million more women in work compared to 2010, adding: “But there is still more to do. Especially with women over 50 – the fastest growing segment in our workforce.”

EHRC chairwoman, Baroness Kishwer Falkner, said: “We hope that

this guidance helps ensure every woman going through the menopause is treated fairly and can work in a supportive and safe environment.”