

Scientists are getting better at predicting the age of menopause – we should talk about it at work too

Factors that could help predict a woman's age at natural menopause have been identified in a study in the Menopause Journal. Using a comprehensive set of potential predictors, researchers determined that higher levels of oestradiol and follicle-stimulating hormone, irregular menstrual cycles and menopause symptoms all strongly indicate a woman is nearing menopause.

The study also states that lifestyle and socioeconomic factors – including smoking, alcohol intake, relationship status, physical activity and hormonal contraception use – can help assess time to menopause. The findings add to the knowledge of what factors should be included in a prediction model for age of menopause, the team said. (*[The North American Menopause Society – press release](#)*)

Why does this matter?

The study's authors say that being able to predict the age a woman is likely to reach natural menopause will be helpful for family planning. It could also help identify those who may experience early menopause, which carries a greater risk for health problems such as cardiovascular disease, depression and osteoporosis. Further, women would like to know how they may experience menopause so they can prepare for symptoms such as irregular or heavy periods, mood changes or hot flushes.

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Some background

Unless for medical reasons, most women typically reach menopause around their late 40s or early 50s, but perimenopausal symptoms can begin up to 10 years earlier – a significant amount of time. Despite this being part of normal life, there is still much cultural stigma attached to it, which makes it difficult for women to talk about.

It's a workplace issue, too

This presents a problem for all aspects of a woman's life, including the workplace. Many are afraid to admit to suffering from problems such as confusion, forgetfulness, tiredness and other related issues, preferring to keep them hidden for fear of being seen as incapable of doing their jobs. Some women may decline to put themselves forward for promotion, while others may call in sick more often or even consider leaving employment altogether. Fears of ridicule and gendered age discrimination are also an issue.

How can employers help?

It's also a difficult issue for line managers, with many saying they don't know how to talk about menopause, or how they can help women going through it.

This is further complicated by the fact that each woman experiences menopause differently. Company guidance and policy could help all members of staff be more aware of menopause and how to better support their colleagues experiencing symptoms. Employers that have an open dialogue on the subject, and which provide flexible working and paid leave when necessary, will be better placed to both attract and retain talent.

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