

# Supporting Menstrual Health in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers

Menstrual health is an essential aspect of overall wellbeing that often goes overlooked in the workplace. As employers, it's crucial to recognise the impact of menstruation on employees and take steps to create a supportive environment. Here are some practical tips and insights to help you support menstrual health in your workplace.

## Understanding Menstrual Health:

Menstruation is a natural bodily function that can come with various physical and emotional symptoms, including cramps, fatigue, mood swings, and more. For some, conditions like endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) can exacerbate these symptoms, making it challenging to maintain productivity and wellbeing at work. It can be experienced by women, transgender and non-binary people.

## Why Support Matters:

Supporting menstrual health in the workplace is not just about compassion; it's about fostering an inclusive and productive work environment. When employees feel understood and supported, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and loyal to the organisation.

## Practical Tips for Employers:

- **Create a Menstrual Leave Policy:** Consider implementing a menstrual leave policy that allows employees to take time off when needed without stigma or penalty.
- **Offer Flexible Working Arrangements:** Allow remote work, flexible hours, or compressed workweeks to help employees manage their symptoms more effectively.
- **Provide Access to Period Products:** Ensure that free period products are available in toilets to reduce stress and inconvenience for employees.
- **Supply Menstrual First Aid:** Equip your workplace with heating pads, pain relief medication, and other comfort items to help employees manage symptoms during work hours.

# Supporting Menstrual Health in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers

- **Encourage Open Communication:** Foster a culture where employees feel comfortable discussing menstrual health issues without fear of judgment or embarrassment.
- **Invest in Practical Furniture and Uniforms:** Provide ergonomic furniture and comfortable uniforms to help employees feel more at ease during their menstrual cycle.
- **Review Absence and Sick Leave Policies:** Adapt policies to be more flexible and accommodating for employees experiencing severe menstrual symptoms.
- **Provide Access to Healthcare:** Offer health benefits that include access to gynaecologists and other specialists who can provide support and treatment for menstrual health conditions.

## Legislation to Be Aware Of:

Employers should be aware of UK legislation that supports menstrual health in the workplace:

### Equality Act 2010:

- **Disability Discrimination** - Menstrual health conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), fibroids, and endometriosis are not considered protected characteristics, nor are they automatically classified as disabilities under the Equality Act 2010. They may be considered disabilities if they have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Employers must make reasonable adjustments to support employees with such conditions.
- **Sex Discrimination** – Any unfair treatment against an employee because of their gender could be classed as discrimination.

*Examples;*

- Treating an employee less favourably because of their menstrual health condition. For instance, if an employee is denied a promotion due to taking time off for severe menstrual symptoms (*Direct*);
- Implementing policies or practices that disadvantage employees with menstrual health conditions. For example, a strict attendance policy that does not account for menstrual health-related absences could disproportionately affect those with severe symptoms (*Indirect*).

# Supporting Menstrual Health in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers

## Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:

Employers must ensure the health, safety, and welfare of employees, which includes providing a safe and supportive environment for those with menstrual health issues.

## Sickness Absence Management:

Employers should manage sickness absence in accordance with their policies and UK employment law. This includes providing statutory sick pay and considering reasonable adjustments for employees with menstrual health conditions.

## Building a Supportive Culture:

Creating a supportive culture starts with leadership. Managers and HR professionals should lead by example, showing empathy and understanding towards menstrual health issues. Training sessions and awareness programs can help educate the entire workforce about the importance of menstrual health and how to support colleagues effectively.

## Conclusion:

Supporting menstrual health in the workplace is a vital step towards creating an inclusive and compassionate work environment. By implementing these practical tips and fostering a culture of understanding, employers can help their employees manage menstrual health challenges and thrive both personally and professionally.

If you like to speak to us on this or other HR and recruitment topics, [contact us](#) today for an initial chat.

*Further resources:*

[Endometriosis UK](#)

[Menstrual Matters](#)

[PCOS Awareness Association](#)

[PMDD Information MIND](#)