

Menstrual & Menopausal WELFARE AT WORK

STOP THE STIGMA

What is menstruation and the menopause?

Menstruation is a normal part of the menstrual cycle that results in bleeding out of the vagina every 28-40 days as the body sheds its uterine lining. Menstruation typically occurs between the ages of 12-45 in people who have a uterus.

Menopause is when a person stops having a period due to lower hormone levels as a natural part of ageing. While this can occur any time between the ages of 45-55, the average age of menopause in Ireland is 51.

What are the symptoms associated with menstruation and the menopause?

Many people experience mild to severe symptoms while menstruating and experiencing menopause that can require extraordinary circumstances to mitigate. These symptoms often include:

MENSTRUATION



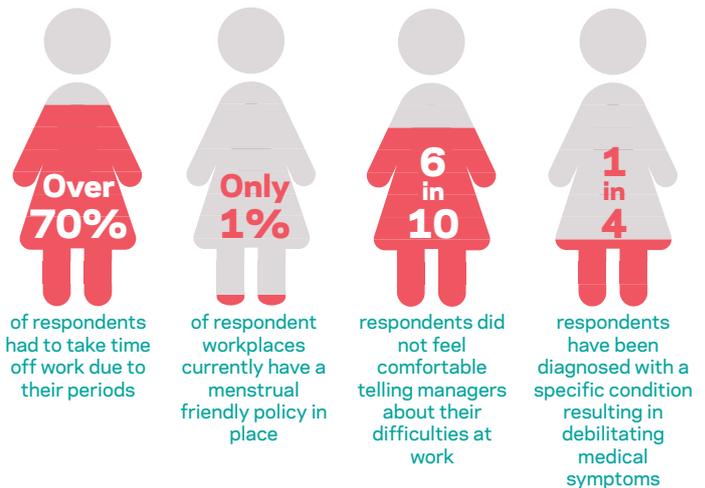
- heavy bleeding
- nausea
- mood swings
- feeling depressed or irritable
- migraines
- tiredness
- bloating
- breast tenderness
- abdominal cramping

MENOPAUSE



- hot flashes
- night sweats
- difficulty sleeping
- fatigue
- lack of energy
- low mood or anxiety
- problems with memory or concentration
- headaches
- heart palpitations
- recurring UTIs
- loss of muscle
- weight gain
- joint aches and pains

The results of Fórsa's survey on menstruation in May of 2022 revealed staggering information about how people are (or are not) coping with menstruation and the menopause in their workplace.



Why is this important in the workplace?

The stigma surrounding periods and the menopause is preventing people from discussing ways to improve their quality of life in the workplace. Issues of absenteeism in the workplace may result in lower rates of career progression, especially for women, who either feel like they can't go for a promotion due to their health or are perceived as less dedicated due to time take off for health reasons. Presenteeism (working while ill) also occurs, and results in lower rates of productivity.

What can your workplace do to improve?

Employers can take several steps to better support those who menstruate or are experiencing the menopause at work:

- Provide free sanitary products to all employees
- Ensure accessibility to proper toilet facilities
- Use of darker fabrics for upholstered furniture and permission for darker fabrics in uniforms
- A form of temperature control to help those experiencing hot flashes
- Use of more breathable fabrics in uniforms
- Improved training on menstruation and menopause for line managers and supervisors
- Access to flexible working arrangements when required