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# Supporting maternity workers with menopause

As part of my office's Gender Equality Network, I have recently been involved in several discussions about menopause and workplace policies. As this is a phenomenon that I believe I will not go through for several years yet, I had not previously spent much time considering the effect that this inevitable experience would have. It has been enlightening (and, at times, slightly unsettling) to learn about the possible effects of menopause, and the ways in which support can be provided for women who are experiencing it.

As one of my colleagues recently highlighted, menopause has been frequently discussed in the news in recent years, as new policies are being established. The Department of Health and Social Care (2021) published its 'vision for the women's health strategy for England', which outlined menopause as a priority area for improvement. On 21 February 2023, one of its goals within the topic of menopause was achieved, as the Department of Health and Social Care (2023) announced a new prescription repayment certificate that allows women in England to access cheaper hormone replacement therapy for menopause.

Last year, the RCM (2022a) reported that employer support for maternity staff who were going through menopause was 'appallingly neglected'. A 2021 survey of RCM (2022b) members reported that of the respondents who asked for reasonable adjustments at work because of menopause symptoms, 72% said no adjustments had been made.

In October 2022, the Royal College of Midwives (2022b) released a publication for midwives on working with the menopause. In addition to explaining what menopause is, its possible symptoms and potential treatments for those symptoms, it also outlines the legal situation in the UK and adjustments that can be made to support maternity workers with the menopause. The guidance states that adjustments should consider issues with



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temperature, ventilation, toilet facilities and access to cold water. It also advises that all line managers receive training, so that they are aware of the symptoms of menopause, how they can affect those going through it and what adjustments may be needed to support them.

Women, like myself, who aren't yet going through the menopause can still help with the needed workplace adjustments. I plan to try and be more aware of my colleagues and if they need any support I can provide, and I will continue to participate in and contribute to the network's discussions on our workplace policies. I would also like to encourage all our readers to be aware of their colleagues' needs and how they might help. **BJM**

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