

Head to head: Should employers offer 'menopause leave' as a stand-alone benefit?

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Benefits Canada

While menopause-specific leave is a practical way to build a more supportive workplace, as a stand-alone policy, it isn't a complete — or necessarily effective — solution.

Erin R. Kuzz, employment lawyer and workplace strategist, Sherrard Kuzz LLP

According to the Menopause Foundation of Canada, women older than age 40 make up 25 per cent of the workforce with those aged 45 to 55 the fastest growing segment of working women in Canada.

Alarming, there's a 40 per cent greater loss of women from the workforce between ages 45 and 59 than similarly aged men. Women experiencing menopause — including perimenopause — are often among an organization's most knowledgeable and experienced employees. Replacing them is costly; retaining them is smart.

Read: Majority of Canadian women aged 35 to 55 say menopause symptoms impact work: survey

Among other measures to support women in this stage of their working lives, employers competing for experienced talent should consider introducing a specific menopause leave as a practical way to build a more supportive and attractive workplace.

A modest menopause leave policy would send a clear message: employees can address a legitimate health issue without having to disclose intimate details, pretend that nothing is wrong (a state of affairs with which most women are all too familiar) or characterize what they're experiencing as an 'illness.' Importantly, it would open up the lines of communication and start to remove the stigma often associated with women's health issues.

The leave could be limited and available only when symptoms prevent an employee from working. It should complement other supports such as flexible hours, remote work and temperature control.

This isn't about assuming that every woman will need a leave or lowering performance expectations; many employees may never use it and no woman is asking to be measured against lower standards. The value lies in knowing the support is available when needed and the message it sends about a workplace's commitment to inclusivity.

Read: Menopause symptoms driving women out of the workforce, costing employers billions: report

In a competitive labour market, that can strengthen recruitment, retention, loyalty and reputation.

Being an employer of choice isn't only about compensation. It's also about showing employees they'll be treated with dignity at every stage of their working lives.

Shawna O'Hearn, co-founder and director, Menopause Society of Nova Scotia

Menopause leave is gaining traction as a progressive workplace benefit.

It can help retain experienced talent and signal that menopause is a legitimate consideration at work. But as a stand-alone policy, it isn't a complete — or necessarily effective — solution.

The challenge is that menopause isn't an illness with a clear start and end point; it's a natural life transition that can unfold over several years. Symptoms such as fatigue, insomnia and brain fog may come and go, making a traditional leave model difficult to define and administer. What qualifies as menopause leave and how should it be applied consistently? Without clear boundaries, policies risk becoming confusing or inconsistent in practice.

There's also a risk of unintended consequences. Isolating menopause into its own category may reinforce bias, subtly framing midlife women as less capable or in need of special accommodation. That perception can undermine the very inclusion these policies are meant to support.

Read: 2025 Healthy Outcomes Conference: The importance of incorporating menopause support into modern workplaces

That doesn't mean employers should do nothing — quite the opposite; it means they should do more.

A more effective approach is to embed menopause within a broader, inclusive framework. Flexible work arrangements, such as adjustable hours or remote options, allow employees to manage symptoms without stepping away entirely. Comprehensive benefits that include hormone therapy, virtual care and mental-health support address a range of needs without singling out one group. Simple workplace adjustments, like improved ventilation or access to cooler spaces, can also make a meaningful difference.

Equipping managers to respond with awareness and flexibility is equally important, ensuring support is applied consistently and without stigma.

Menopause leave may be a well-intentioned signal, but it isn't a strategy. If the goal is to retain talent and build truly inclusive workplaces, employers need to move beyond single-issue policies and design systems that support employees through all life stages, including menopause.

Read: [Symcor hosting menopause awareness session, supporting employees with benefits, resources](#)
