


# Menopause Workplace Resource Guide for Managers







SWHR acknowledges that there are valued groups of people who may benefit from our materials who do not identify as women. We encourage those who identify differently to engage with us and our content.

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**Publication Date: March 2024**



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## Who is this guide for?

The Menopause Workplace Resource Guide for Managers aims to provide information and tools to employers, managers, and human resource professionals working with employees who may be experiencing menopause. With the guidance of an interdisciplinary working group of menopause and workplace wellness researchers and strategists, human resource professionals, advocacy leaders, and health care providers, recommendations and resources have been compiled to assist managers in supporting their teams and organizations in creating foundational changes for employee wellbeing and retention. These recommendations can be scaled and/or adapted as appropriate depending on the company size and industry.

*\* This poster can be printed and placed in an office breakroom or bathroom to increase awareness about menopause in the workplace.*

# About This Guide

## About SWHR

The Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR) is a national nonprofit and thought leader dedicated to advancing women's health through science, policy, and education while promoting research on sex differences to optimize women's health. Founded in 1990 by a group of physicians, medical researchers, and health advocates, SWHR is making women's health mainstream by addressing unmet needs and research gaps in women's health. Thanks to SWHR's efforts, women are now routinely included in most major medical research studies and more scientists are considering sex as a biological variable in their research. Visit [www.swhr.org](http://www.swhr.org) for more information.

## The EMPACT Menopause Study

The **Employee Perspectives and Challenges Concerning the Transition of Menopause (EMPACT Menopause) Study** aims to improve workplace experiences for the significant portion of the workforce that transitions into menopause. As part of the study, SWHR conducted a survey – Understanding the Impact of Menopause on the Workplace – to collect valuable insights about the experiences of individuals who have entered or completed the menopause transition, as well as their coworkers and employers. Data from the study and SWHR's broader Menopause Program will be used to inform resources and activities that support menopause wellness for all women. Read the [EMPACT Menopause Study Bulletin](#).

## Acknowledgements

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# Menopause 101

Although the term menopause is often used loosely to describe the entire time frame of **midlife** changes, there are different stages to menopause.

## PERIMENOPAUSE

The transitional time when the body experiences a natural decline in reproductive hormones, resulting in the end of a woman's menstrual cycles.

This **menopause transition** typically lasts 4-8 years, but can last more than a decade.

## MENOPAUSE

The moment in life that is defined once 12 consecutive months have passed after the last menstrual cycle.

## POSTMENOPAUSE

The life stage after menopause has completed.

The average age of menopause in the United States is 51. However, medical procedures, such as surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy, that damage or remove the ovaries can result in the onset of menopause, regardless of age. Between 5-10% of women will enter menopause before the age of 45, and another 5% after the age of 55.<sup>1</sup>

**There is no right or wrong way to progress through the stages of menopause.**

Common symptoms associated with menopause include:

- ▶ Changes in your menstrual cycle
- ▶ Hot flashes, night sweats
- ▶ Sleep disturbances, insomnia
- ▶ Brain fog, difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Weight gain
- ▶ Vaginal dryness or irritation
- ▶ Reduced sexual desire or arousal
- ▶ Joint pain



While certain symptoms may be periodic (e.g., hot flashes and brain fog), other imprecise symptoms such as sleep and mood disturbances, weight gain, and joint pain can impact overall health, quality of life, and perspectives on work-life engagement. Not all women will experience symptoms that are disruptive to their daily lives; however, for those who do, a combination of medical treatments, supportive community, and an accessible work environment, can help women better navigate their menopause journey.

The [\*\*SWHR Menopause Preparedness Toolkit: A Woman's Empowerment Guide\*\*](#) contains additional information about understanding menopause and its impact on women's health, as well as wellness tips to support this important transition and life stage.

# Understanding the Menopause Experience

Approximately 57% of all women in the United States work and many have multiple jobs.<sup>2</sup> Women are employed in a diverse array of industries and account for over half of essential workers in industries, such as education, health care, finance, and hospitality. In fact, 75% of women ages 45 to 54 participate in the US workforce. Given the average age at menopause in the United States is 51, a significant portion of the labor force will work throughout their menopause transition and for years postmenopause.

**\$150 Billion**  
**Menopause-related**  
**productivity losses**  
**worldwide**

The impact of menopause on the workplace is significant for employees, employers, and the economy. The direct and indirect costs associated with qualified candidates detouring career growth, **absenteeism** and **presenteeism**, increased health care costs, and departures from the workforce altogether have a meaningful impact on business.

The timing of the menopause transition often overlaps with key career growth years for many women, as they may pursue management or senior leadership positions. A challenging menopause experience has the potential to redirect an individual's career; however, understanding the cost of menopause on the workplace cannot be limited to reduced earning potential. It is critically important to recognize the value lost when this workforce demographic must choose between their health and wellbeing and their livelihood and career. Companies that appropriately address the menopause experience in the workplace can increase productivity and improve retention of talented employees throughout their workforce.

The **EMPACT Menopause Study** survey shows that menopause can have far-reaching impacts on a woman's career-related decisions.

**1 in 4**

women considered not pursuing or did not pursue a leadership opportunity



**1 in 3**

women considered reducing or reduced their workload

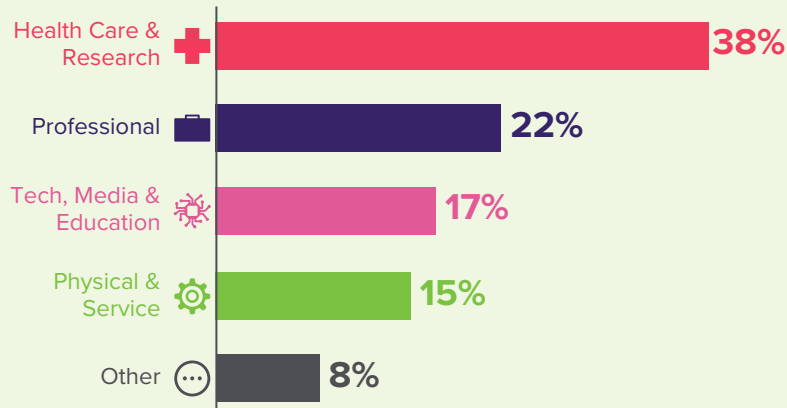


**2 out of 5**

women considered finding or found a new job

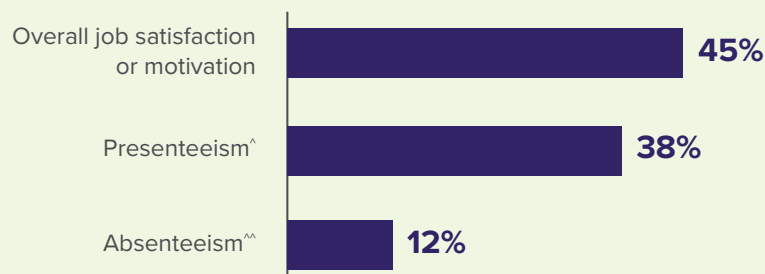


## Workplace Industry\* of EMPACT Menopause survey respondents:



While there are treatment options for all menopause symptoms, and many will likely go away in time, symptoms can sometimes be difficult to manage and lead to challenges at work. For many individuals, menopause impacts how they feel about their job rather than their work productivity or quality. Work conditions, policies, and stigma associated with aging, womanhood, and menopause also add to the burden of menopause. Companies that address these issues can not only limit legal risk, but also attract talented employees, increase retention, and improve work environments for staff.

## Women reported that their menopause symptoms affected:



^ Frequency of working while feeling unwell

^^ Frequency of taking leave

\* Health Care & Research Industries include health care and life and social sciences jobs

Professional Industries include professional, administrative, government, and financial service jobs

Tech, Media, & Education Industries include arts, media, engineering, computer, and education jobs

Physical & Service Industries include retail, hospitality, transportation, utilities, manufacturing, construction, agriculture, and protective services jobs]



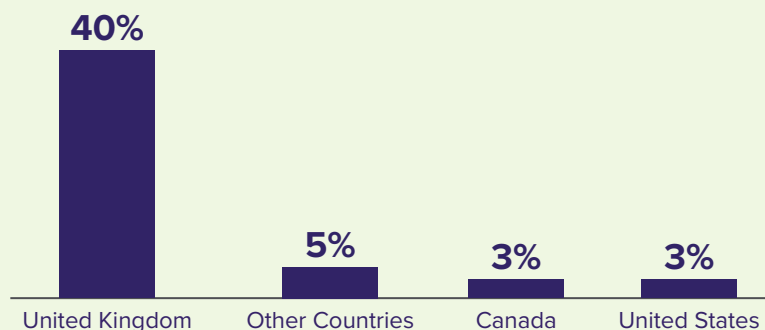
# Menopause at Work

## Global Trends

Global trends in workplace conversations about menopause indicate a growing recognition of the need for such discussions. Organizations worldwide are embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, which include addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by employees experiencing menopause. Workshops and support networks are emerging as common practices to create a greater sense of community and understanding. This global shift acknowledging the importance of holistic well-being in the workplace, including health considerations such as menopause, is vital for employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational success.

***“Females in my age range experienced tremendous amounts and forms [of] suppression and harassment because of [the] female body and perceptions. Now [I am] facing [the] reality of menopause in [the] workplace. I’m exhausted.”***  
– EMPACT Menopause survey respondent

## Presence of Menopause-Specific Policies (EMPACT Menopause Survey)



Countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States each have their unique approaches to workplace practices and health coverage, as well as menopause education and care – all of which feed into the culture surrounding policies, support resources, and comfort levels in addressing menopause and broader women’s health. Efforts are growing to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and provide the necessary support for women navigating the menopause transition.





## Corporate Responsibility

Half of all individuals employed in the US between the ages of 40 and 64 are women – the majority of which have begun or completed the menopause transition.<sup>2</sup> It is imperative that companies strategize to ensure the well-being and continued productivity of women throughout their career. **Employers are responsible for creating and maintaining a conducive and healthy work environment for all employees, including those experiencing menopause.** Supporting women during midlife and the menopause transition is vital for retaining talent, fostering career growth, and boosting economic development – all hallmarks of a competitive business.

**While 2 out of 5 women considered finding or found a new job due menopause, 25% of women considered leaving or left the workforce altogether.**

61% of employees indicated there were no menopause-specific policies at their place of work, and another 1/3 of employees were unsure if resources were available to them. Similar figures were represented among supervisors' knowledge of menopause workplace policies.

Companies must champion efforts to ensure that policies and accommodations are appropriate to address critical and diverse needs among their workforce, as well as properly communicate how employees can access the resources available to them. While the knowledge base begins during employee onboarding, periodic reminders are key to maintaining visibility among workers throughout the year. Continuing to promote inclusive health and wellness benefits within an organization will ensure employees prioritize their health and take full advantage of those resources.

Increasing availability of resources and policies for menopause benefit both employees and the broader company by promoting an inclusive working environment, employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. If there are not appropriate and accessible resources available, company leadership should work with HR to identify potential accommodations and initiatives to support this important demographic of employees.



# Cultivating Menopause-Friendly Workplaces

## Menopause Readiness Assessment

It is important to evaluate the current state of your organization for its readiness and capacity to provide a safe and supportive environment for all employees, including those experiencing menopause.

Below are some starter questions to consider meeting the diverse needs of women throughout the menopause transition:

- ▶ Which formal policies (if any) currently exist specifically to address menopause challenges in the workplace?
- ▶ Which other policies are in place that could be adopted to address menopause challenges in the workplace?
- ▶ Are there adaptable, flexible, or alternative options for employee uniforms (if applicable) (e.g., lighter weight fabric, removable or additional layers/sleeves, looser fitting options)?
- ▶ How up-to-date and accommodating are our temperature and ventilation systems within the workplace?
- ▶ Are water and restrooms easily accessible throughout the workplace?



## Creating Safe Spaces

Employees concerned about stigma or misconceptions surrounding menopause may not seek assistance in their workplace. Therefore, it is essential that employers cultivate an environment where outreach is met with empathy and understanding. Organizations and those in supervisory roles must ensure that employees have safe spaces and communities within their work environment to share challenges and pursue solutions for maintaining a fulfilling and successful work life.



Consider hosting educational activities and centralized resources, such as:

- ▶ **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)**
- ▶ Workshops on inclusive practices
- ▶ Educational seminars or webinars about menopause
- ▶ Working groups or committees on women's health
- ▶ Facilitated discussions about menopause and other health-related topics
- ▶ Information sessions about company HR practices and policies

The [References & Resources](#) section of the **SWHR Menopause Workplace Resource Guide for Managers** has more information and guidance on setting up menopause-friendly resources in the workplace.

Create spaces for individuals across the lifespan and career span to share their knowledge and personal journeys to foster inspiration and connectedness. These peer-to-peer engagement activities help to combat stigma and ageism, and bridge gaps across all levels of the organization. For example:

- ▶ Mentorship opportunities and programs (formal or informal)
- ▶ Career coaching and professional development
- ▶ Cross-departmental collaboration
- ▶ Idea storming sessions
- ▶ Networking events

For individuals that may not feel comfortable openly sharing their experiences or reaching out for accommodations, it may be beneficial for organizations to also have feedback mechanisms in place. Some examples include:

- ▶ General employee engagement surveys
- ▶ Team-specific needs assessment surveys
- ▶ Workplace improvement suggestion boxes

Moreover, anonymous feedback can have the added benefit of creating a safe space for providing honest commentary, protecting the privacy of employees, and giving individuals the opportunity to empower and advocate for themselves with reduced risk of backlash.





# Supporting All Employees Around Menopause

## Menopause Workplace Policies

*97% of supervisors indicated either a lack of awareness or the existence of formal policies that address menopause challenges in the workplace.*

While your company may not have menopause-specific policies in place, there may be other policies that can be adapted or integrated to address various challenges for menopausal employees. Examples might include policies that focus on:

- ▶ Mental health and wellness support
- ▶ Flexible work schedules
- ▶ **Employee resource group** opportunities

To be an advocate, it is important to remind employees what benefits and rights they have in the workplace. If your organization is willing to create a formal menopause policy, this is a great step to show solidarity with members of your workforce who are and will experience that transition while working for your company.



## Simple and Systemic Practices

Providing accommodations for individuals may improve their work experience, however, it may not change company culture. To make company-wide shifts, consider more systemic efforts, such as instituting new or reformed policies, required training, and wellness-promoting activities. These changes can be cost-effective and build upon practices that are already in place. Suggested policies and practices to consider for your company might address:

- ▶ **Increasing Awareness** about aging and menopause through training, workshops, and resource sharing
- ▶ **Eliminating Discrimination** and potential backlash for those who advocate for accommodations or culture changes, especially in age- and gender-dominated industries
- ▶ **Promoting Diversity and Inclusion** for the wide range of experiences and presentation of employees who experience menopause during their work life

Menopause does not have a stereotypical look, age, or experience. Some individuals may experience premature menopause before the age of 40, and other menopausal workers may not present as a woman “of a certain age” or a woman at all. Gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, ability, and socioeconomic status are just some of the many factors that impact a woman’s menopause journey and workplace experience. Inclusive policies that honor the great diversity of menopause experiences are more likely to foster patience and compassion from others in the workplace.

When developing new policies, consider how stigma and lack of education about menopause affects an employee’s willingness to discuss menopause at work. Menopause is an important and necessary topic to include in conversations about age discrimination for women in the workplace. Lastly, companies should encourage managers to exercise patience and compassion with their employees as they navigate changes in their life and health while at work. This principle is not only important for engaging individuals experiencing menopause, but also for all employees at any company.

**Companies can benefit from offering expanded and/or inclusive health insurance coverage that allows employees to access additional resources to treat symptoms and address challenges associated with menopause and healthy aging.**



The [References & Resources Section](#) of the SWHR Menopause Workplace Resource Guide for Managers contains additional educational materials and downloadable templates to promote menopause-friendly policies and workplaces for all employees.

# Menopause-Friendly Workplace Accommodations

It can be difficult for employees to discuss aging, menopause, or other health challenges, especially at work. However, it is important that company leadership and managers encourage sharing these experiences for the promotion of a healthy workplace culture without penalty or discrimination.. Productive conversations between employees and their managers or HR about menopause can help the company to better understand what types of accommodations employees might need. Additionally, offering accessible feedback mechanisms can provide an avenue for employees to share their concerns and make requests anonymously.

**Only 16% of women employees reported feeling comfortable asking for accommodations to address their menopause-related challenges at work.**

**According to a national survey by the Job Accommodation Network, 49% of employers said the accommodations needed by their employees cost absolutely nothing. Another 43% provided accommodations that required a one-time cost, with the median expenditure being only \$300.<sup>3</sup>**

If any or certain accommodations are not possible to implement, it is equally important to have clear and honest conversations with employees and identify alternative solutions to their challenges. Sometimes providing support around the menopause experience can be just as valuable as formal accommodations.

Workplace accommodations can look different depending on the industry, as well as the demands and tasks associated with an employee's job. Consider accommodations that can best meet the overarching needs of your company's diverse workforce, while leaving room for creativity to implement accommodations for the unique needs of a given employee. Examples of accommodations are listed below, based on overarching demands of a job, regardless of industry, and many are simple and/or cost-effective for your company to provide.





## Physically Demanding Work

- ▶ Extra or frequent breaks throughout the day
- ▶ Access to cold water or cooling devices (e.g., fans, towels, misters)
- ▶ Consistent access to restrooms
- ▶ Flexible uniforms or adapted dress codes
- ▶ Comfortable workspaces (e.g., adjustable temperature, dedicated rest areas)
- ▶ Shift in job duties to reduce physical labor
- ▶ Designated areas to freshen up, change clothes, or access sanitary products



## Intellectually Demanding Work

- ▶ Flexible work hours or alternative work schedules
- ▶ Flexible deadlines or deadline extensions (as appropriate)
- ▶ Use of supportive services and devices (e.g., adjustable desk furniture, notetaking support, adaptive tools)
- ▶ Access to quiet workspaces or white noise/sound machines
- ▶ Broad spectrum or natural lighting
- ▶ Flexible meeting schedules
- ▶ Access to task management tools



## Emotionally Demanding Work

- ▶ Time off for medical appointments
- ▶ Telework options
- ▶ Employee resource groups
- ▶ Individual coaching or therapy sessions
- ▶ Employee assistance programs (EAP)

# Workplace Conversations About Menopause

## Facilitating Constructive Conversations

Managers and Human Resource (HR) professionals should be encouraged and empowered to create open and non-judgmental spaces for employees to discuss their menopausal experiences as well as other health topics that may affect their work life. By fostering a culture of open communication, employees may be more inclined to share their concerns or needs related to menopause, allowing HR to provide appropriate support for them and others in similar situations.

Productive conversations between employees and managers, especially about sensitive or personal topics such as menopause, must strike the right balance between professionalism, compassion, and practicality.

**Consider how a meeting format and platform should be designed to meet the conversation goals and the unique needs of the employee:**

- **One-on-one vs. group meetings**
- **Regularly scheduled check-ins vs. informal or impromptu conversations**
- **Virtual vs. in-person conversations**
- **Anonymous or named suggestion boxes**
- **Internal vs. external professional or facilitator/coach**

## Conversation Tips for Managers

1. **Offer privacy and confidentiality.** When addressing menopause-related issues with employees, managers should initiate conversations in confidence, giving the employee the appropriate privacy to share their experiences, concerns, and any specific needs related to their menopause and work life without fear of judgment or disclosure to other colleagues. It is important to reassure employees that they have control over if and how the conversations might escalate to engage others in the company.
2. **Use inclusive and empathetic language.** Menopause does not have a singular look, age, or experience. Using inclusive language when discussing menopause will help employees who do not present as “stereotypical women of a certain age” engage in conversations or seek support. Managers should approach discussions with sensitivity, acknowledging the diversity of challenges employees may face and respecting the individual experiences of each person.

**EMPACT Menopause survey respondents shared a desire for “open communication” and “empathy and/or understanding from colleagues and all levels of leadership.”**

### 3. **Ask open-ended questions.**

Open-ended questions tend to invite employees to share their thoughts and feelings without offering assumptions in the wording. Ask questions that give employees the opportunity to express themselves freely and without judgment. For example:



- What (if at all) has helped or hindered your ability to talk to colleagues or supervisors about your work-related menopause experience or needs?
- Can you describe 1 or 2 instances where you felt supported or faced work-related challenges due to your menopause experience? What could have made the challenging situations better for you?
- Please share 2-3 adjustments that you would suggest we can work towards to address your biggest menopause-related challenges at work?
- What are some features of an ideal workplace in terms of inclusivity and support for women experiencing menopause?
- What is one thing that you wish your coworkers (or this company as a whole) would better understand about menopause?
- Would you like to lead or start an initiative to improve your team's (or this company's) perspective on menopause in the workplace?

**4. Escalate when necessary.** If a matter requires escalation, managers should communicate that certain content from their discussions will be shared – remembering to de-identify the employee whenever possible to avoid unintended embarrassment or backlash. If the discussion involves medical history, doctor recommendations, and other sensitive information, managers should refer employees directly to their HR department to assist them in addressing their needs.



# Key Terms

**Absenteeism** – Unplanned and frequent time taken off work for lengths beyond what is typically considered acceptable, often due to chronic medical problems, ongoing personal issues, or other reasons

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** – A voluntary program through which companies offer free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems

**Employee Resource Group (ERG)** – A voluntary, employee-led group whose aim is to foster a diverse, inclusive workplace aligned with the organizations they serve

**Menopause** – A life stage, typically in a woman's late 40s or 50s, defined once 12 months have passed after the last menstrual cycle. Medical procedures that damage or remove the ovaries can also result in the onset of menopause, regardless of age.

**Midlife** – The central period of a person's life, spanning from approximately age 40 to 65; also referred to as middle age

**Perimenopause** – The transitional time (typically lasting 4-8 years) when the body experiences the natural decline in reproductive hormones, resulting in the end of a woman's menstrual cycles; also known as the menopause transition

**Presenteeism** – The loss in productivity when an employee is not fully functioning in the workplace because of an illness, injury, or other condition

**Vasomotor symptoms (VMS)** – Menopausal symptoms involving temperature regulation, including hot flashes and night sweats

# References & Resources

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## Menopause Workplace Resources

- **EMPACT Menopause Bulletin:** [https://swhr.org/swhr\\_resource/empact-menopause-study](https://swhr.org/swhr_resource/empact-menopause-study)
- **Impact of Menopause Symptoms on Women in the Workplace** (Faubion et al., *Mayo Clin Proc*, 2023): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2023.02.025>
- **Job Accommodation Network:** <https://askjan.org>
- **Menopause Information Pack for Organizations (MIPO) resources:** <https://www.menopauseatwork.org/free-resources>
- **Reed Menopause Policy template (UK):** <https://www.reedglobal.hu/en/blog/2023/07/menopause-policy-downloadable-template>
- **Smarter Menopause blog (UK):** <https://smartermenopause.com/index.php/blog-2>
- **SWHR Menopause Preparedness Toolkit:** [https://swhr.org/swhr\\_resource/menopause-preparedness-toolkit-a-womans-empowerment-guide](https://swhr.org/swhr_resource/menopause-preparedness-toolkit-a-womans-empowerment-guide)
- **SWHR Menopause Workplace Resource Guide for Women:** [https://swhr.org/swhr\\_resource/menopause-workplace-resource-guide-for-women](https://swhr.org/swhr_resource/menopause-workplace-resource-guide-for-women)
- **Working Through Menopause: The Impact on Women, Businesses and the Bottom Line** (book by Seibel & Seibel, 2022): <https://drmache.com/workingthroughmenopause>

## Support Organizations

- **Black Girl's Guide to Surviving Menopause:** <https://blackgirlsguidetosurvivingmenopause.com>
- **Let's Talk Menopause:** <https://www.letstalkmenopause.org>
- **Menopause Information Pack for Organizations (MIPO):** <https://www.menopauseatwork.org>
- **National Menopause Foundation:** <https://nationalmenopausefoundation.org>
- **Red Hot Mamas:** <https://redhotmamas.org>
- **The Menopause Society (formerly North American Menopause Society):** <https://www.menopause.org>
- **Women Living Better:** <https://womenlivingbetter.org>

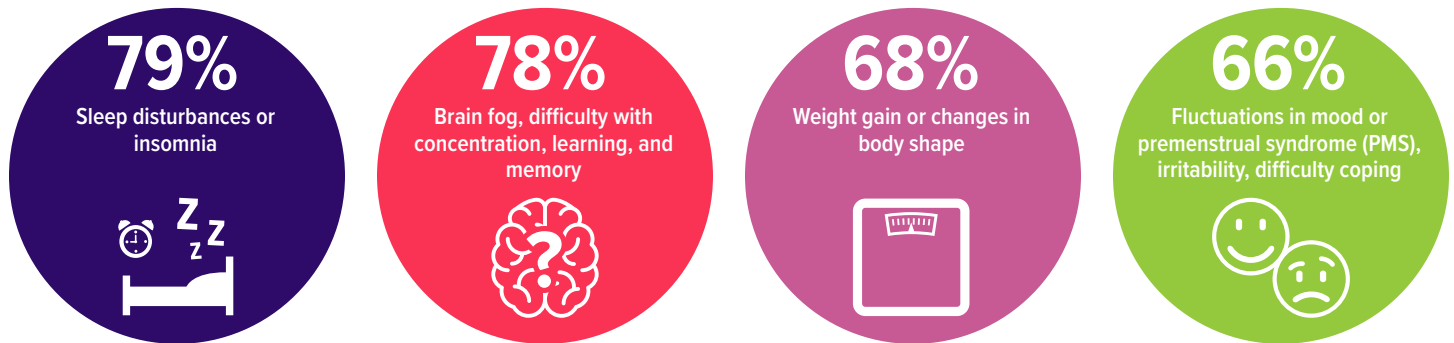


# Supporting the Menopause Journey in the Workplace

Women in their late 40s and 50s typically undergo menopause when the body experiences a decline in reproductive hormones, resulting in the end of her menstrual cycles. The menopause transition typically lasts 4-8 years, but can also occur due to medical procedures that damage or remove the ovaries, regardless of age.



According to the **EMPACT Menopause Study**, women reported certain menopause symptoms significantly disrupting their work:



**Only 31%** of women felt comfortable talking about their personal menopause symptoms or experiences at work. Building awareness of the diverse experiences of women during and after the menopause transition helps to create more inclusive workplaces.

## How can you show support?

### ► ENGAGE.

Open the door to building relationships with your coworkers. Ask about how they are doing and what support they might need. Sharing your own life experiences may encourage others to do the same.

### ► EMPATHIZE.

Acknowledge your biases and be curious. Ask questions sensitively and actively listen to the responses so that you can better understand other people's experiences and how they make them feel.

### ► EDUCATE.

Be an ally and advocate to promote change. Sharing resources and increasing awareness of inclusive policies can help women navigate menopause challenges in the workplace.

To learn more about the **EMPACT Menopause Study** or **SWHR Menopause Workplace Resource Guides**, visit [www.swhr.org](http://www.swhr.org)



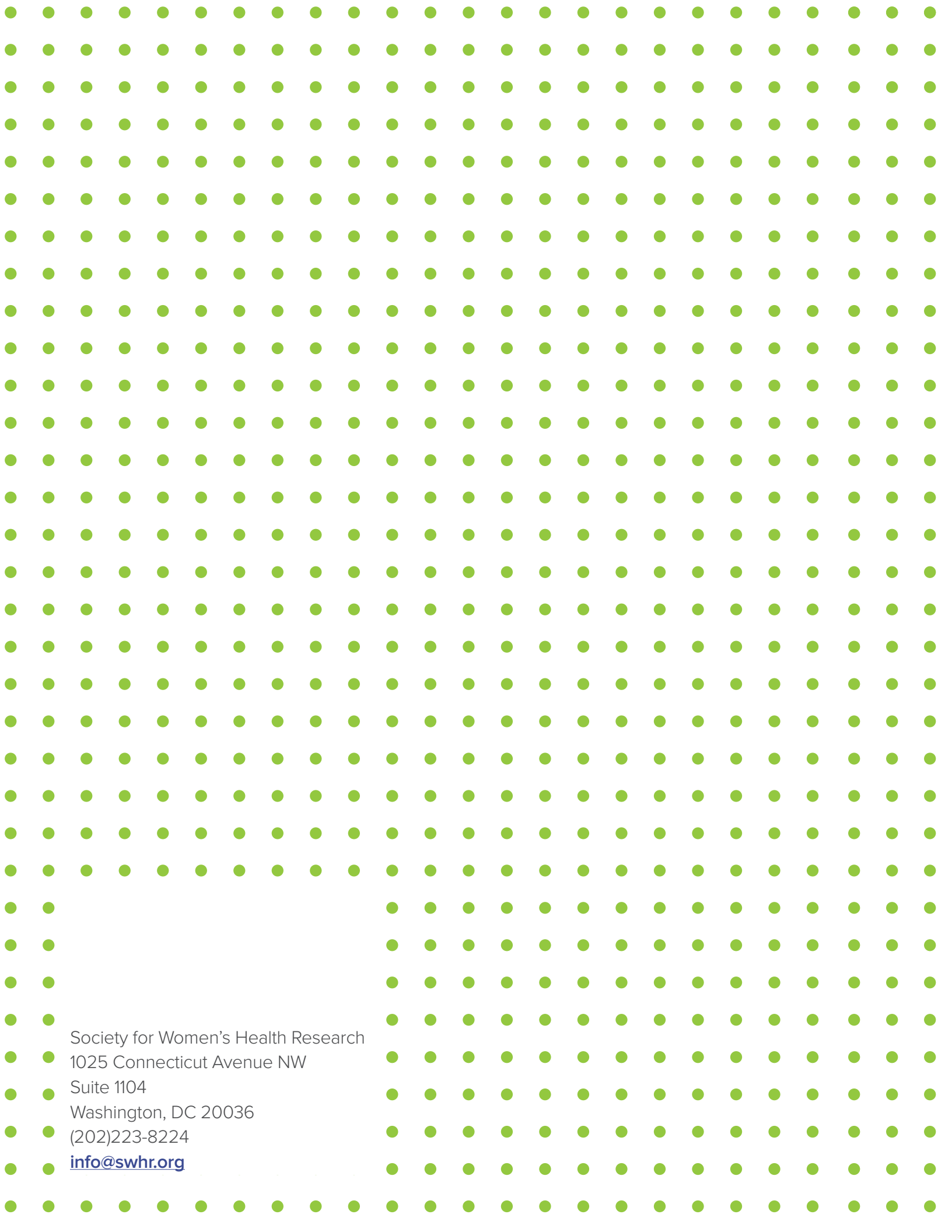


SWHR extends our sincere thanks to the following sponsor for their support of this educational work:



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