

Menopause and the Workplace

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<https://drjick.com/menopause-resources/menopause-and-the-workplace>

Disclaimer

Nothing Dr. Jick says should be interpreted as medical advice from a physician to a patient, even if you are an existing patient of Dr. Jick or Fair Oaks Women's Health.

Topics

- What is the Workplace?
- What is Menopause?
- Impact of Menopause in the Workplace
- Why is this happening?
- What can we do?

The Workplace

- The setting—physical or virtual—where work is performed.
- Includes:
 - Day shift and Night shift
 - Sedentary or Physical
 - Indoor or Outdoor
 - Flexible hours or Restricted hours
 - Home or Other Location(s)
- Women in the Workplace – 45-64 yr old
 - In 2024, 28M women 45-64 yr old were employed – US Bureau of Labor
 - Total workforce in 2024 = 168M
 - About 1 in 6 people who work are menopausal age women

What is Menopause?

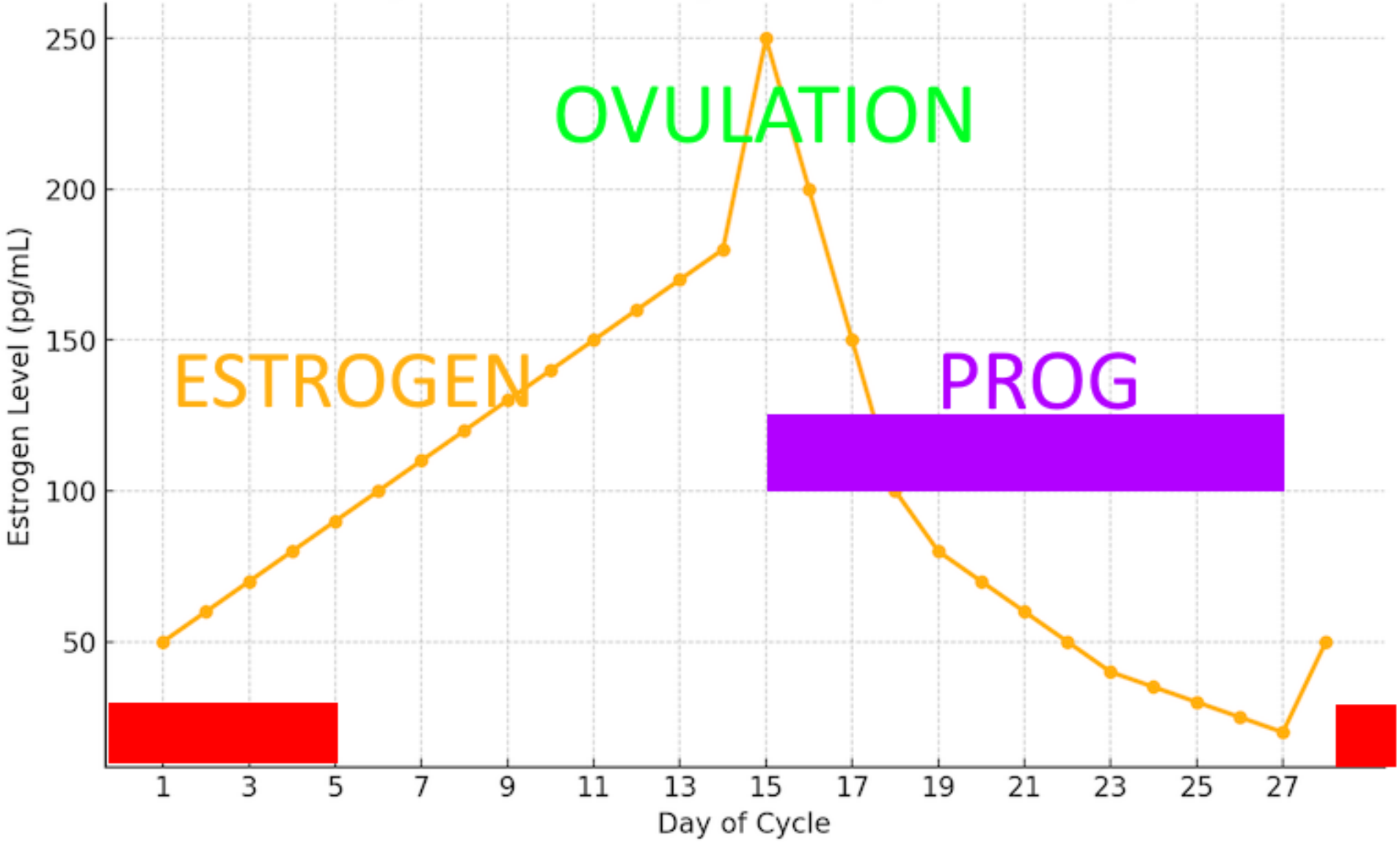
PERIMENOPAUSE

- Onset varies, usually early to mid 40's
- Hormones fluctuate – “roller coaster”
- **MANY SYMPTOMS**
- The hand lotion metaphor

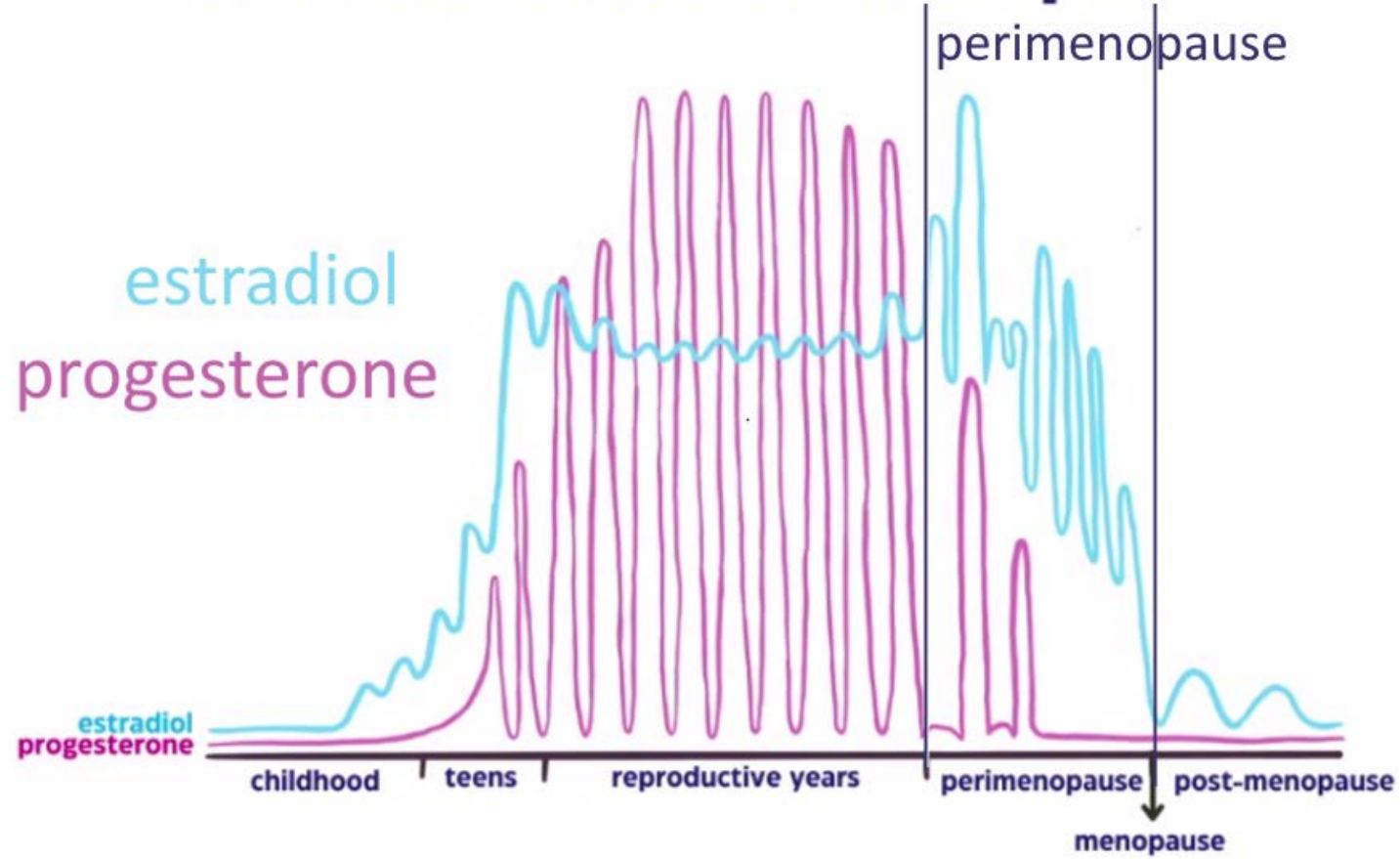
MENOPAUSE

- Average age 51 (range is 45-55)

Estrogen Levels During a 28-Day Menstrual Cycle



Hormones Across Lifespan



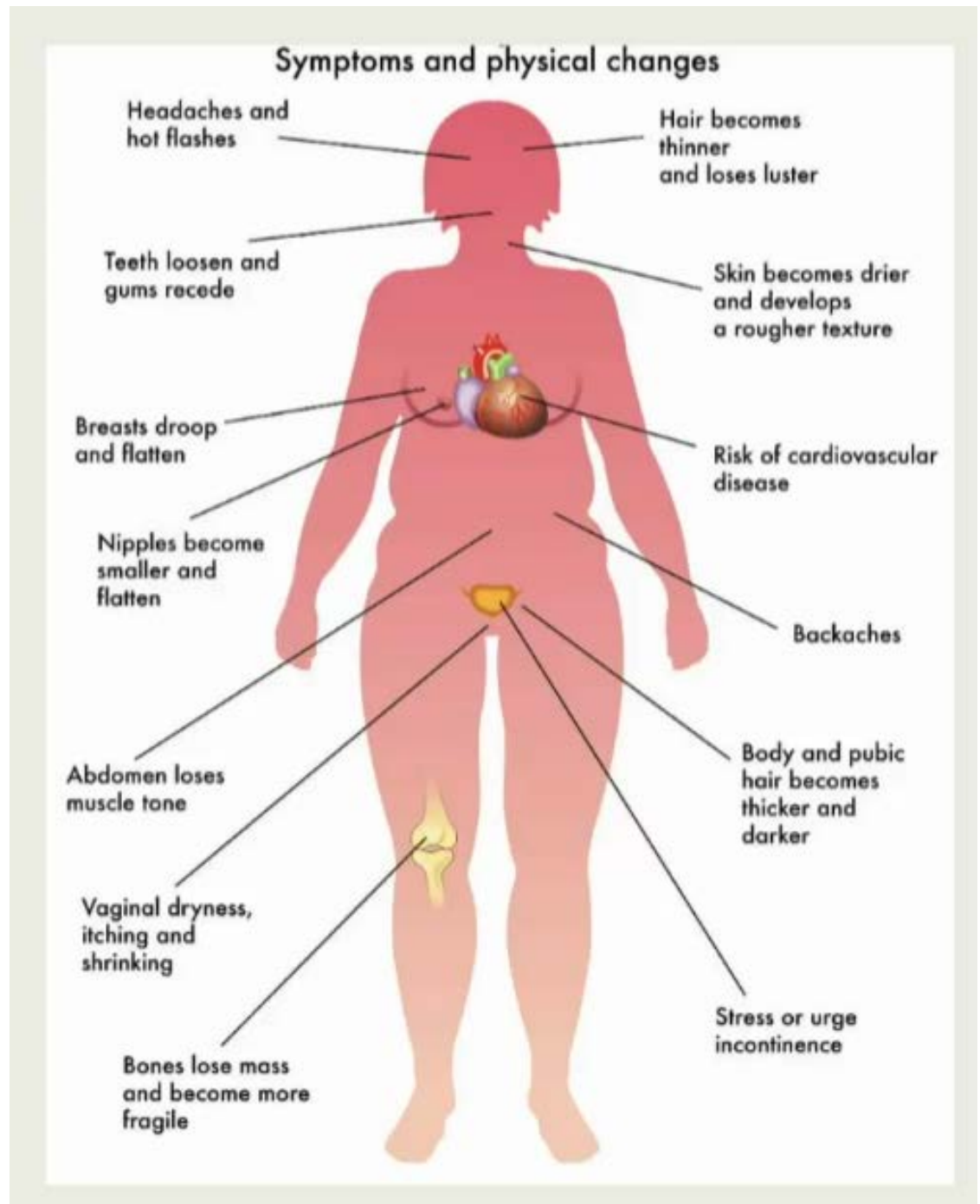
Hand Lotion Metaphor

1. Full bottle at birth
2. The lotion = eggs and hormones, the pump is the brain
3. Opens about age 10. Takes a few “pumps” to get going
4. Smooth going for years, light press, predictable
5. Running low, have to press harder, oops!
6. Running really low, press and press and press and a little comes out
7. All gone



SYMPTOMS

1. Hot Flashes, Sweating
2. Palpitations
3. Sleep Disturbances
4. Mood Changes – anxiety, short fuse, panic attacks
5. Brain Fog – decreased focus, forgetfulness
6. Fatigue, Exhaustion
7. Dry Skin
8. Joint Pains
9. Urinary Urgency, Frequency
10. Abnormal Bleeding





Now that's
what I call
a hot flash!

Menopause in the Workplace



MAYO CLINIC PROCEEDINGS

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Impact of Menopause Symptoms on Women in the Workplace

Stephanie S. Faubion, MD, MBA; Felicity Enders, PhD; Mary S. Hedges, MD; Rajeev Chaudhry, MBBS, MPH; Juliana M. Kling, MD, MPH; Chrisandra L. Shufelt, MD, MS; Mariam Saadedine, MD; Kristin Mara, MS; Joan M. Griffin, PhD; and Ekta Kapoor, MBBS

1. A one-time survey study among women aged 45 to 60 years receiving primary care at Mayo Clinic
2. Menopause symptoms were assessed utilizing the Menopause Rating Scale (MRS).
3. Participants were asked to report if they experienced adverse work outcomes in the past 6-12 months
missed days of work, hours cut back at work, laid off or fired from work, quit/retired/changed jobs
4. 4,500 surveys received

Menopause Rating Scale (MRS)

Which of the following symptoms apply to you at this time? Please, mark the appropriate box for each symptom. For symptoms that do not apply, please mark 'none'.

Symptoms:

	none	mild	moderate	severe	very severe
	----- ----- ----- -----				
Score =	0	1	2	3	4
1. Hot flushes, sweating (episodes of sweating).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Heart discomfort (unusual awareness of heart beat, heart skipping, heart racing, tightness).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Sleep problems (difficulty in falling asleep, difficulty in sleeping through, waking up early).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Depressive mood (feeling down, sad, on the verge of tears, lack of drive, mood swings).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Irritability (feeling nervous, inner tension, feeling aggressive).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Anxiety (inner restlessness, feeling panicky).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Physical and mental exhaustion (general decrease in performance, impaired memory, decrease in concentration, forgetfulness).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Sexual problems (change in sexual desire, in sexual activity and satisfaction).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Bladder problems (difficulty in urinating, increased need to urinate, bladder incontinence).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Dryness of vagina (sensation of dryness or burning in the vagina, difficulty with sexual intercourse).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Joint and muscular discomfort (pain in the joints, rheumatoid complaints).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Interpretation

0–4 No/few complaints

5–8 Mild

9–16 Moderate

17+ Severe

MAXIMUM - 44

OUTCOMES

- 14% at least 1 adverse work outcome
- 11% Missed at least one day of work

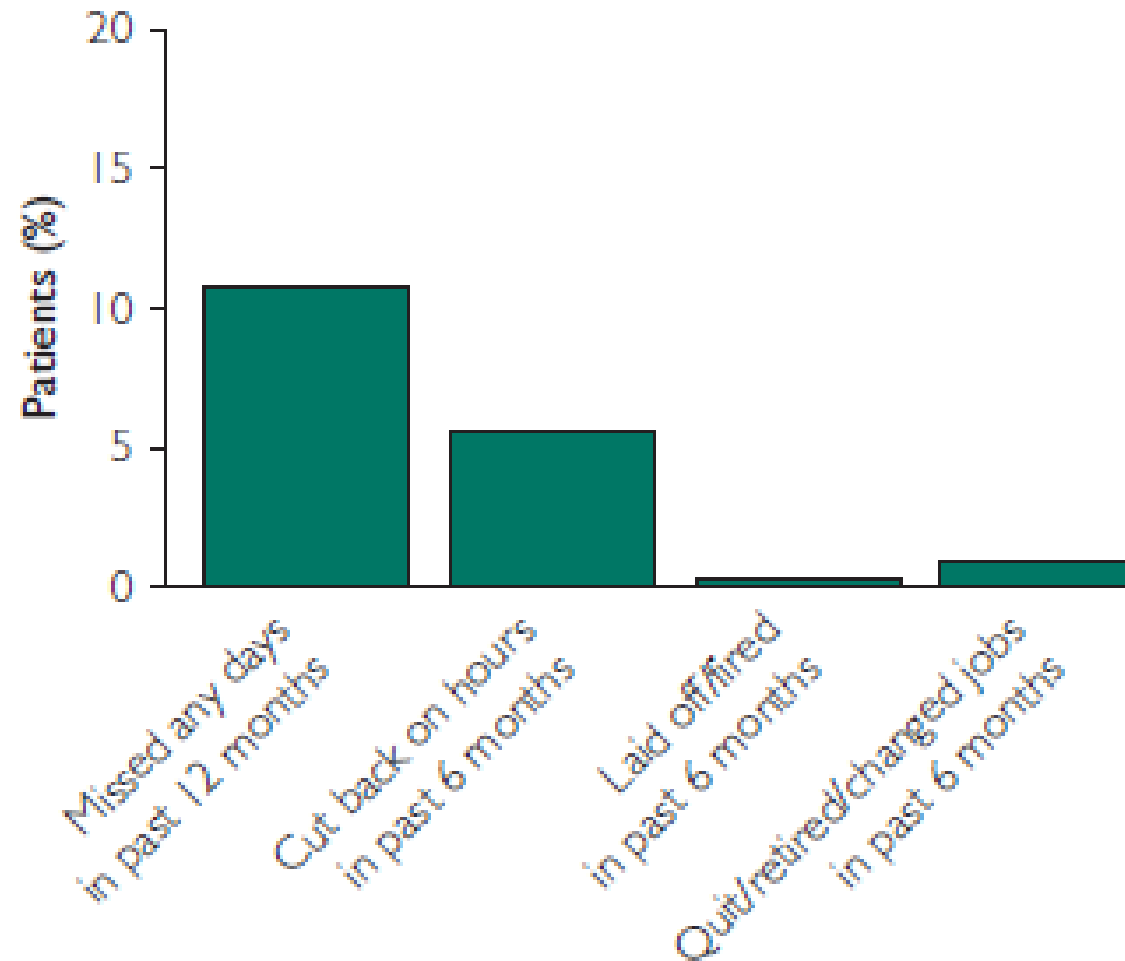


FIGURE 1. Specific adverse work outcomes due to menopausal symptoms. Each bar represents the percentage of women who reported each specific adverse work outcome due to menopausal symptoms.

OUTCOMES

- 4 quartiles of scores
- The higher the MRS score, the more likely there was an adverse work outcome
- Women in the highest symptom quartile were 15.6 times more likely to report an adverse work outcome due to menopause symptoms than those in the lowest quartile

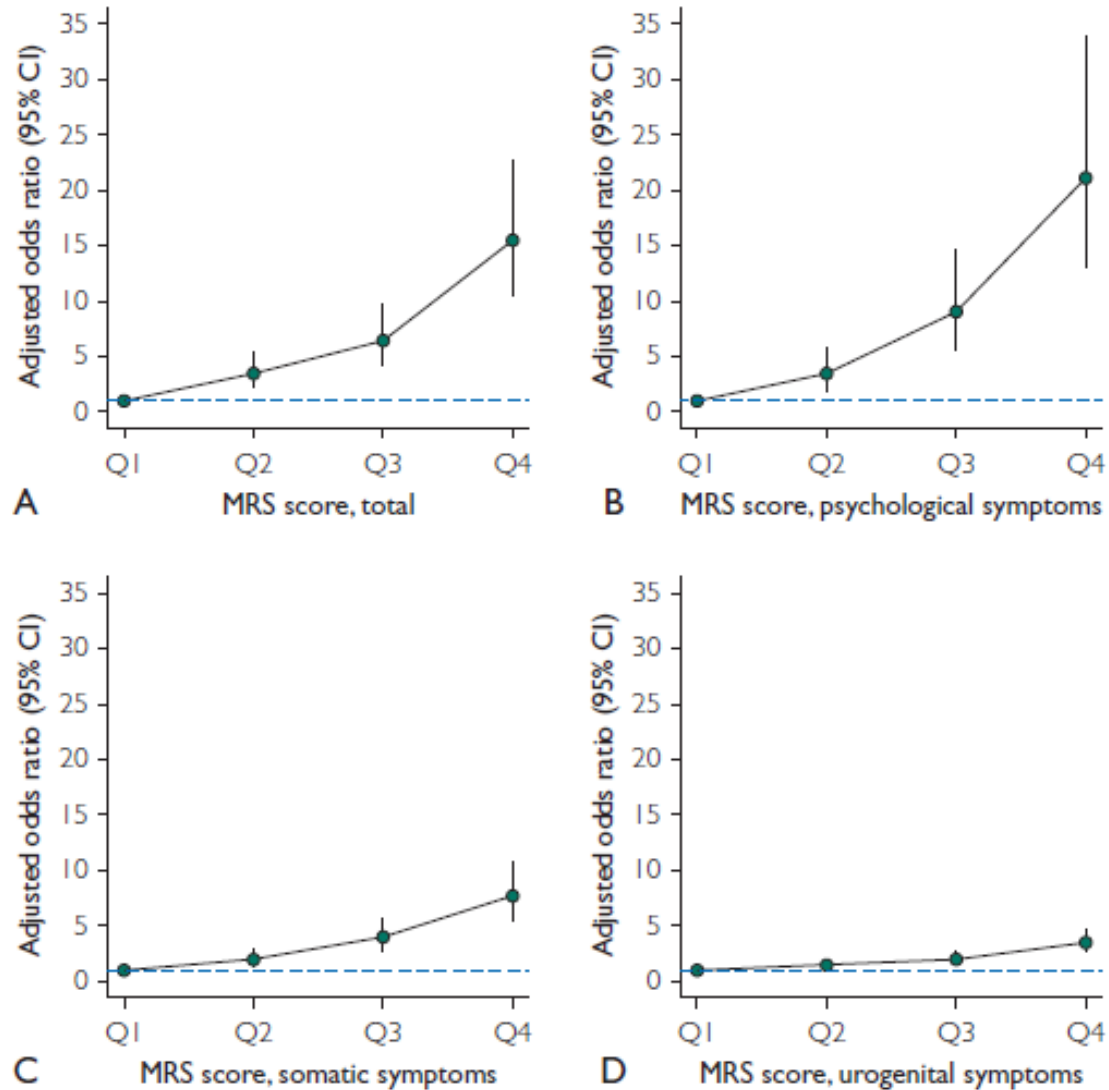


FIGURE 2. Associations of Menopause Rating Scale (MRS) score quartiles with an adverse work outcome due to menopausal symptoms. Logistic regression was used to assess the association of any adverse work outcome due to menopausal symptoms (dependent variable) and MRS score total and domain score quartiles after adjusting for systemic hormone therapy.

Findings

COST OF MISSED WORK

- 15,000,000 women aged 45 to 60 years working full-time in the United States. 11% miss at least day of work per year due to menopause, avg. is 3 days of missed work annually.
- Cost associated with lost work productivity related to menopause symptoms in the U.S. is approximately \$1.8B annually.
- Healthcare costs for menopause estimated at \$24B annually

Total cost to society: \$26B annually.

Discussion

The fact that...“women may opt out of employment, and consequently out of the leadership development pipeline, identifies a potentially unrecognized reason for the leaky leadership pipeline and the paucity of women in senior leadership positions.”

“The relationship between menopause symptoms and work outcomes may in fact be bidirectional, with work-related factors also influencing the menopause experience.”

There is a “...critical need to make the workplace environment more supportive for women going through this universal life stage.”

WHY?

Fear

“Many women do not disclose their menopause status at work, driven by concerns and experiences of gendered ageism, where menopausal women might be unfairly perceived as less competitive, competent, or capable.” (1)

“Between 15% and 40% of women going through menopause experience some problems coping with their symptoms at work. This suggests that the majority of women do not experience difficulties, or do not report them.” (2)

“Menopause is a taboo subject in society, including among women. It will take some successful and courageous women to talk about it to break the stigma. Employers should encourage this.” (3)

1. Mayo Clin Proc. 2023 Jun;98(6):833-845. Impact of Menopause Symptoms on Women in the Workplace. Stephanie S Faubion, Felicity Enders, et al.
2. Findings from women in the Health and Employment after Fifty (HEAF) study. 2022
3. BofA Report “Break through the Stigma”, Menopause in the Workplace. 2024.

“It’s the chats with colleagues that get me through.
Not the policy, not HR, just knowing you’re not alone”

- I actually thought I’d got onset dementia... I was putting my pens in the fridge and leaving keys in the front door. (Jill)
- I thought I hated everyone. I was like, I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I thought I was going mad. (Fiona)
- My resilience just totally went... I couldn’t manage the pressure anymore. And I had no idea that that was the menopause. I just thought it was me. (Jackie)
- You feel like you’re constantly trying to prove that you can still do the job, that you’re still sharp, still capable. (Nina)
- I didn’t know we had a menopause policy and I’ve worked here for years. (Laura)
- I’d rather go to a champion or someone who actually gets it, not my 30-year-old male manager. (Nina)

Menopause Workplace Policies

- 2 in 3 employees state there are no menopause specific policies at work.
- SURVEY of 350 female employees – 45-60 yr old (4)

The most desired measures were the least likely to be implemented. “Formal menopause policy,” “managerial training,” “managerial solutions,” and “access to menopause specialists,” were desired by 65-68% of participants but only implemented in 2-6% of the participants' workplaces.

On the contrary, “flexible working hours” and “remote work option” were among the less desired measures (respectively, 52.2% and 46.5%) and the most implemented (respectively, 38.2% and 43.8%)

- “The number one reason employers don’t offer menopause specific policies is that employees don’t ask for them (5).”

4. Navigating menopause at work: a preliminary study about challenges and support systems. Menopause. Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 258-265. 2024. Elisabet Alzueta, PhD.

5. BofA Report “Break through the Stigma”, Menopause in the Workplace. 2024.

Are you angry at:

- Co-workers who turn up the thermostat, or won't let you open a window
- Having to wear awful outfits that worsen or reveal your sweating
- Lack of access to a bathroom or place to cool off
- Colleagues who make fun of menopause, especially during meetings
- Managers who question your sick call
- Indifference from HR, who denies your requests for basic accommodations
- Younger colleagues or managers who have no understanding or empathy for what you are going through

What can we do?

Employees must ask for menopause policies that...

- Improve the Work Environment -flexible hours, bathroom access, feminine hygiene products available, time off for doctors or self care, sick time, uniform re-designs, temperature controls, cooling areas
- Require the workforce - Managers and Staff - to be educated
- Implement zero tolerance for menopause discrimination
- Provide support systems: 1 on 1, Peer groups, HR
- Allow concerns to be submitted anonymously
- Provide health coverage including mental health

“Without mechanisms for implementation, accountability, and training, policies can risk becoming performative rather than transformative.” (6)

Benefits of a “Menopause-Friendly” Workplace

- Increased Productivity
- Employee Morale and Satisfaction
- Employee Retention
- Recruitment Advantage
- Public Recognition

Menopause, women and the workplace

Karen Walker-Bone^a  and Susan Davis^b 

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“The menopause research community must continue to ensure that working with menopause is supported but must do so without exposing women to further prejudice and inequality in the workplace. It is important that menopause does not become another excuse for favoring male over female workers.”

Menopause Workplace Resource Guide for Women



Maturitas 151 (2021) 55–62



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Maturitas

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/maturitas



Global consensus recommendations on menopause in the workplace: A European Menopause and Andropause Society (EMAS) position statement

MAYO CLINIC

Maturitas 185 (2024) 107983



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

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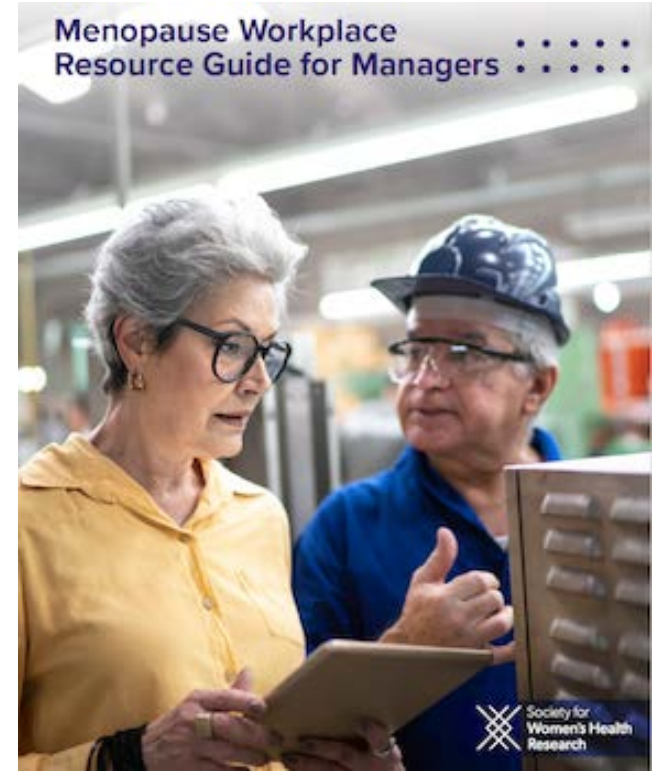
Review article

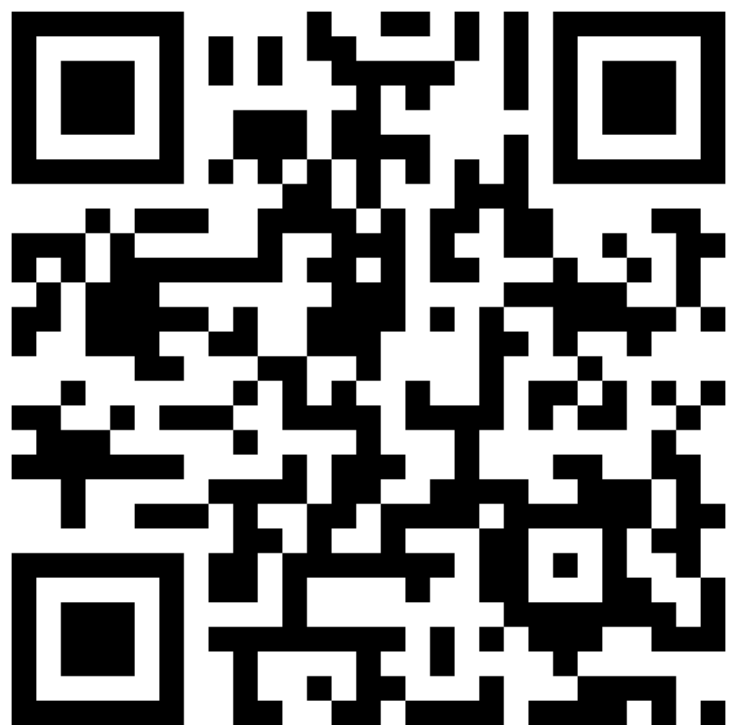
Menopause in the workplace: Challenges, impact, and next steps

Nancy Safwan^{a,b}, Mariam Saadedine^{a,b}, Chrisandra L. Shufelt^{a,b,c}, Ekta Kapoor^{a,b,c,d}, Juliana M. Kling^{b,e}, Rajeev Chaudhry^{b,f}, Stephanie S. Faubion^{a,b,*}



Menopause Workplace Resource Guide for Managers





Making Menopause Work™

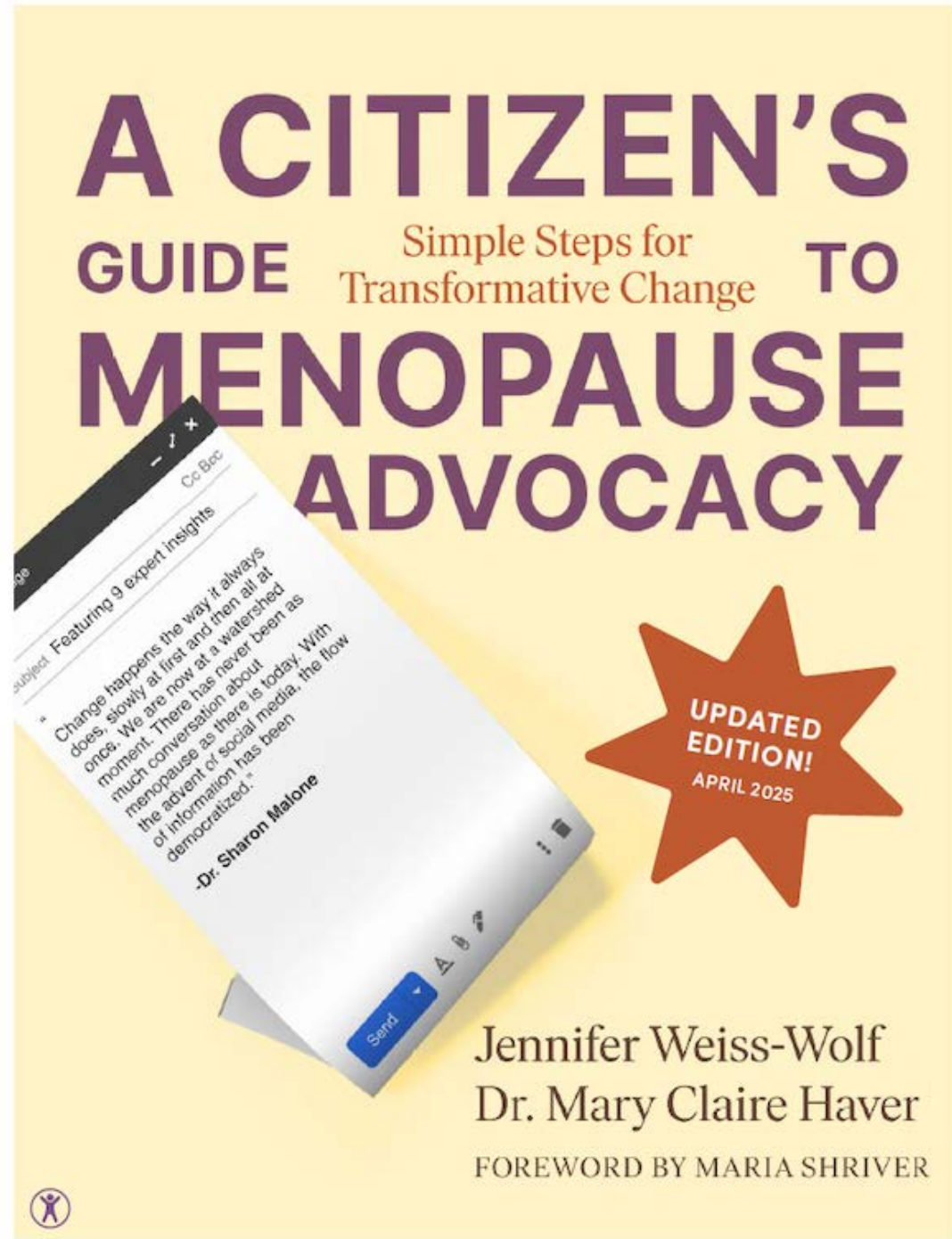


*Menopause can be a time of renewal and focus. For some people, bothersome symptoms during perimenopause and menopause can interfere with work. This can affect career satisfaction, lead to missed workdays or early retirement, and harm people's long-term financial stability. **Supportive workplaces can have a powerful impact.***

<https://menopause.org/workplace>



<https://thepauselife.com/pages/menopause-advocacy>



Carol found her own way
of coping with the hot
flushes



Menopause Survival Kit

Cooling

- Face cooling mist
- Small fan – battery or paper, neck fan
- Wet wipes – evaporation can be cooling

Mood, Energy, Aches

- Advil
- Aromatherapy – lavender or peppermint
- Dark chocolate
- Instant coffee “sticks” or packets - energy
- Note cards and pen – help remember
- Written affirmations – “Hot flashes are power surges!”

Face, Lips, Skin, Hair

- Breath mints or spray
- Hair scrunchy
- Lip balm
- Lozenges for dry or sore throat
- Moisturizer for dry skin
- Scarf

Genito-urinary

- Emergency underwear
- Change of clothes
- Liners or pads – possible spotting or leakage
- Vaginal moisturizer (Replens) – for dryness



Women Have Been Misled About Menopause

Hot flashes, sleeplessness, pain during sex: For some of menopause's worst symptoms, there's an established treatment. Why aren't more women offered it?



Menopause....

I start each day as
Mary Poppins...



...and end it as
Cruella de Vil.

???

RESOURCES

<https://drjick.com/menopause-resources/menopause-and-the-workplace>

Dr. Jick – SPEAKER

<https://drjick.com/menopause-resources/menopause-speaker>

FEEDBACK – 1 minute

https://form.jotform.com/drjick/webinar_feedback

