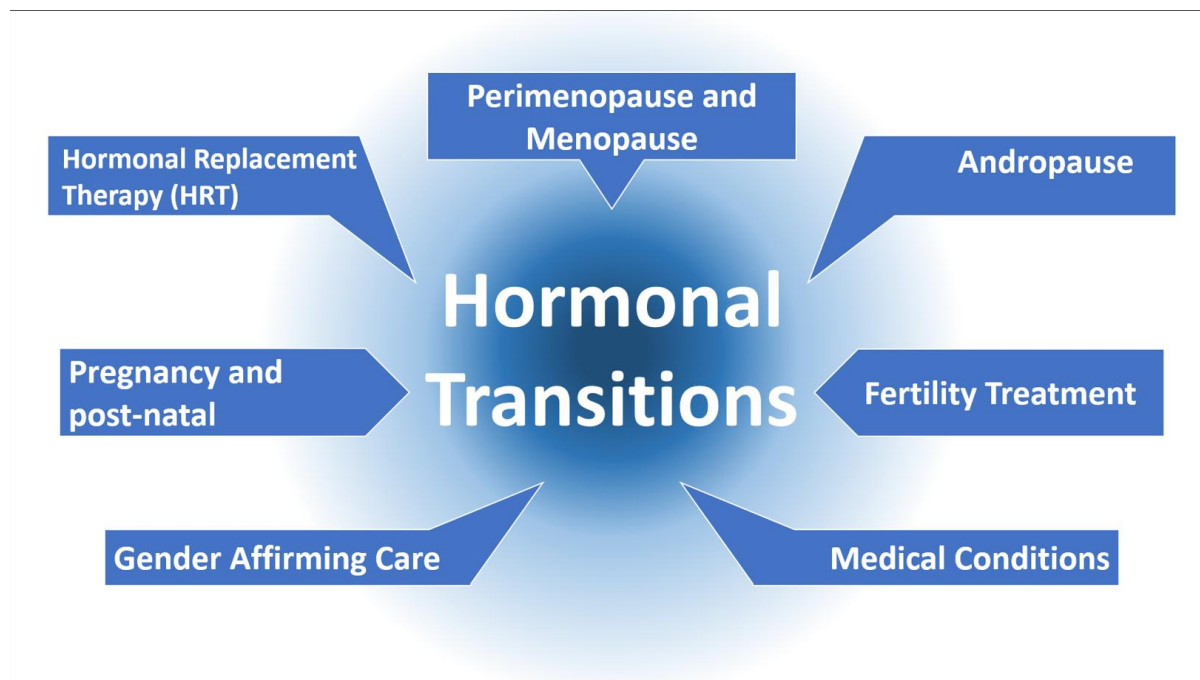


CDOIF: Hormonal Changes - A Guide to Recognising, Managing & Coping.



Hormonal changes, such as menopause, fertility treatment, andropause, and gender-affirming care can significantly affect individuals' physical and mental wellbeing at work.

For many workers, these changes are managed independently and privately without the need for additional support. However, employers can introduce policies, support mechanisms and reasonable adjustments to support affected workers.

This guidance aims to help employers create an inclusive, respectful, and supportive working environment that proactively helps workers to manage their overall wellbeing. It includes practical advice for Line Managers on reasonable adjustments and conducting sensitive conversations on the deeply personal topic of hormonal changes.

Why is this important?

In a high hazard and often physically demanding sector such as the chemical industry, managing the impacts of hormonal changes is essential for:

- Promoting employee health and wellbeing
- Ensuring health and safety standards are upheld
- Supporting diversity and inclusion commitments
- Meeting legal duty of care under:
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

In the chemical industry, particularly where an individual is in a safety critical role, the impacts of hormonal change can increase both individual and organisational risk factors through impacts such as:

- Reduced ability to concentrate and make decisions effectively
- Discomfort in uniforms, locker rooms and working in areas with higher ambient temperatures (e.g. plant areas)
- PPE incompatibility (e.g. discomfort from hot flushes or physical changes such as chest development)
- Stigma or discrimination among colleagues leading to poor mental health.

How do I know if a worker is impacted?

Outward signs will vary from person to person. Any shift in an individual's character is worth noticing and there are several indicators which could suggest that individuals may be experiencing hormone-related changes, which include:

- Behavioural, emotional and physical changes (e.g loss of confidence, heightened emotional reactions, lack of care in appearance)
- Reduced or lack of engagement with colleagues
- Increase in absence or a change in absence pattern, such as repeated short-term absences.
- Decrease in productivity and/or quality of output.

Typical symptoms that individuals may experience and which may significantly impact their overall mental and physical health and wellbeing can include:

Menopause, Perimenopause & Medical Menopause

- Refers to the decline in reproductive hormones in biological females
- Usually occurs between ages 35–55 but may be earlier if medically induced as part of e.g. hormone-sensitive cancer treatment
- Symptoms may include hot flushes, brain fog, fatigue, anxiety, joint pain, irregular sleep and concentration issues. It can also lead to sarcopenia (muscle density loss) and osteopenia (bone density loss), potentially making injuries more likely to occur.

Fertility Treatments

- Refers to medical interventions to assist with conception (e.g hormone injections)
- Symptoms may include hot flushes, fatigue, anxiety, irritability, headaches, nausea, abdominal discomfort and bloating, irregular sleep and visual disturbances.

Andropause

- Refers to the decline in reproductive hormones in biological males
- Symptoms may include low mood, reduced libido, fatigue, poor concentration and muscle density loss (sarcopenia).

Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy

- Part of transitioning for some trans and non-binary people
- May include use of oestrogen, testosterone or hormone blockers
- Symptoms may include emotional shifts, fatigue, changes in body composition or effects from withdrawal of hormones pre-surgery.

What should I be doing?

- Understand the types of hormonal changes, symptoms that can arise and potential impact of these on an individual at work
- Spot the signs that someone may need support
- Create a private, respectful space for conversations
- Discuss and implement reasonable adjustments
- Refer to HR or Occupational Health for complex cases or where repeated / long term sickness absence occurs
- Document and review adjustments regularly
- Treat all discussions with strict confidentiality
- Promote a culture where workers feel safe to be open and dialogue can be maintained.

How can I do it?

- Implementing awareness training on how hormonal change happens and the impact it can have on people.
- Implementing training for frontline Supervisors and Line Managers in how to have sensitive conversations with their teams. There needs to be an ability to start confidential and sensitive discussions without fear of reprisals or information being made public.
- Considering when adjustments may be necessary, and working with the individual to understand the support required (e.g consideration for flexible working, access to private rest areas).
- Working with HR and consider implementing / encouraging use of an employee assistance programme (EAP), along with training Menopause Ambassadors and Mental Health First Aiders to provide support.
- Involving Occupational Health in return-to-work plans following absence or treatment.

In high-risk environments and / or where the individual involved has a safety critical role:

- Monitoring effects of fatigue, concentration issues or medication on safe working
- Conducting individual risk assessments if hormonal changes affect ability to safely perform tasks
- Adjusting duties or removing the individual from high-risk areas temporarily if needed.

What Are The Key Indicators of Good Practice?

- Workplace risk assessments consider hormonal health risks, particularly in relation to safety critical roles and tasks
- Employees feel safe to raise concerns and request adjustments
- Employee assistance programmes (EAP's) and OH referrals are accessible and confidential
- Policies reflect diversity and changing workforce needs
- Leaders regularly monitor culture, seek feedback and communicate actions taken in response to this.

Further Information:

- HSE Guidance – Menopause at Work: www.hse.gov.uk
- CIPD Menopause Resources: www.cipd.org/uk
- ACAS – Supporting Trans Employees: www.acas.org.uk
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC): www.equalityhumanrights.com
- NHS Inform – Menopause & The Workplace: [Menopause and the workplace | NHS inform](#)
- NHS Better Health – Every Mind Matters: [Work-related stress - NHS](#)