Work adjustments

Practical scaffolding, and what to ask for.

THE LEGAL POSITION, ACCURATELY

Menopause is not itself a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Protection comes through existing protected characteristics, principally age, sex and disability. Symptoms with a substantial and long term adverse effect on day to day activities may meet the definition of a disability, which brings a duty to make reasonable adjustments. Employers also have duties under health and safety legislation.

Adjustments worth asking for

IF THE DIFFICULTY IS	ASK FOR
Temperature	A desk away from direct heat, a fan, control over local temperature, flexibility on uniform
Sleep and fatigue	Flexible start times, and not scheduling demanding work first thing after a bad night
Concentration	A quieter space for focused work, permission to take notes in meetings, fewer interruptions
Appointments	Time off for healthcare appointments, often already covered by existing policy
Heavy bleeding	Easy access to toilet facilities and somewhere to keep supplies

Three ways to raise it

- **Direct.** I am going through perimenopause and it is affecting my sleep and concentration. Here are two adjustments that would help.
- **Without disclosing.** I am dealing with a health issue affecting my sleep. Could we look at my start time.
- **Through occupational health.** Many larger employers have this, and it can recommend adjustments without disclosing details to your manager.

A low risk opening move

Ask whether your organisation has a menopause policy, or whether menopause is mentioned in existing wellbeing policies. That question tells you a great deal about how the conversation is likely to go, and if the answer is nothing, that is itself useful information.

> **BEFORE YOU REDUCE YOUR HOURS OR LEAVE**
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> Please do not make that decision until you have had the medical conversation and tried the adjustments. Symptoms that feel permanent in the middle of them often are not, and a decision made at the worst point is not the same as one made on full information. If you think you are being treated unfairly, that is a conversation for ACAS, your union or an employment solicitor.