Stop. Make a Change.

Toolbox Talk: Menopause & Supporting Women at Work and at Home

Time: 15 Minutes

Audience: Construction Operatives

Purpose: Raise awareness about menopause, its impact on women, and how male colleagues, friends, and family can offer support.

1. Introduction

Let's be honest - menopause isn't something we usually talk about on site. But we should. **More than half the population will go through it**, and many of us will work with, live with, or care about someone who's experiencing it. This is about being a decent mate, colleague, partner, son, or dad.

Menopause affects physical and mental health. It can impact on how women feel, work, and function. If we understand it better, we can support better.

2. What is Menopause?

- Menopause marks the **end of a woman's reproductive years** (usually occurring between the ages of 45-55).
- It's caused by **hormone changes**, especially a drop in oestrogen.
- It's not just about hot flushes.

Common symptoms:

- Hot flushes or night sweats
- Poor sleep or fatigue
- Brain fog or trouble concentrating
- Anxiety or low mood
- Joint aches
- Mood swings or irritability
- Irregular periods (during perimenopause)

Symptoms can last **years** and vary from woman to woman.

3. Why It Matters On Site

Imagine feeling exhausted, sweating, and anxious, but having to hide it every day.

That's the reality for many women.

- Women make up a growing part of the construction industry
- Menopause can impact confidence and performance
- If not understood, it can lead to:
    - Mistaken assumptions ('she's just stressed')

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- Poor support
- Women leaving the workforce

Let's create a work culture where people feel **safe and respected**, no matter what they're going through.

4. What You Can Do To Support

At work:

- Don't joke about 'mood swings' or 'hot flushes'
- Be respectful if someone needs a break, fan, or a moment
- If you're a manager, be open to flexible breaks or adjustments
- Just listen. You don't need to 'fix' it

At home:

- Be patient. Hormonal changes can make things unpredictable
- Offer emotional support, not judgement
- Encourage talking to a GP for help or treatment

Overall:

- It's okay to not understand everything. Ask, listen, learn
- Menopause is not a weakness. It's a natural life stage

Support doesn't cost anything. But it makes a huge difference.

5. Key Takeaways

- Menopause affects physical and mental wellbeing
- It's not just a women's issue - it's a **people** issue
- Show support through listening, respect, and small acts of kindness
- A supportive site is a stronger, safer site

6. Signposting & Resources (1 min)

- **NHS website** - for symptoms and treatments
- **Henpicked - Menopause in the Workplace** www.menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk
- **Menopause Matters** - advice and support for women and families
- Encourage colleagues to speak with **Occupational Health** or a GP

Optional Group Questions

- Have you ever seen a colleague struggling and not known what to say? How can we make our site more supportive

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