

● BS 30416:2023

Menstruation, Menstrual
Health and Menopause in
the Workplace – Guide

A BSI executive briefing



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Overview

BS 30416:2023 was developed to offer guidance to organizations on how they can effectively support employees with their experiences of menstruation and the menopause transition in the workplace.

As workplaces were first established at a time when women were only a minority of the workforce, they were rarely designed with consideration of menstruation and the menopause. Today, a significant proportion of the workforce menstruates or experiences the menopause transition. Yet, that has not necessarily meant that workplace environments, practices, and cultures have been adapted to accommodate the needs of women (and other employees such as transgender men) who menstruate or experience menopause transition. As menstrual and menopausal experience can impact an employee's attendance, ability to perform certain duties, and their job satisfaction, it is vital that employers understand how they can foster an inclusive workplace culture and make helpful

adjustments. Workplace guidance that supports the menstrual and menopausal experiences of employees is not only advantageous to employees themselves. Indeed, as such guidance can ensure the retention of experienced staff and attract new highly skilled employees, it is also beneficial to employers and the UK economy more broadly.

As BS 30416:2023 underscores, menstruation and menopause transition are natural bodily processes that most employees can manage independently with little need for workplace adjustments. Nevertheless, workplaces can have a positive impact on the wellbeing and working lives of these employees through minor accommodations (such as comfortable seating and being able to use a fan during work hours). For some employees, however,



adjustments and support may be vital to ensure that they can perform their roles effectively and remain in the workplace. For example, when undiagnosed, untreated and inadequately supported, endometriosis, which is a condition that affects approximately 10% of women of a reproductive age, can lead to absenteeism, presenteeism, and low employee satisfaction.

In addition to offering practical guidance, BS 30416:2023 also suggests how employers can create a more open and inclusive workplace culture around menstruation and menopause. Due to factors such as stigma, myth, and a lack of accurate information about menstruation and menopause, employers may be unaware or misinformed about how to support employees who menstruate or experience menopause transition. Similarly, employees may also lack knowledge about menstruation and

menopause, struggle to discuss these topics, and be unaware of relevant services. Facilitating open and inclusive conversation around menstruation and menopause can help employees to understand each other better. Discussions about menstruation and menopause may also inspire employees (including those who do not menstruate) to speak up about other health and wellbeing issues. For instance, an awareness of the impact of Pre-Menstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) on mental health may encourage employees to talk more openly about mental health in general. Conversations about menstrual and menopausal health can help other employees to consider their own wellbeing. Therefore, even though the focus of BS 30416:2023 is on menstruation and menopause, its recommendations can benefit all employees.

Target Audience

The document is targeted at managers, human resources (HR), diversity and inclusion specialists (D&I), health and safety personnel (H&S), occupational health (OH), architects, and designers of office spaces. The guidance can benefit any other members of staff who are responsible for managing the performance, workload, wellbeing, and work environment of others.

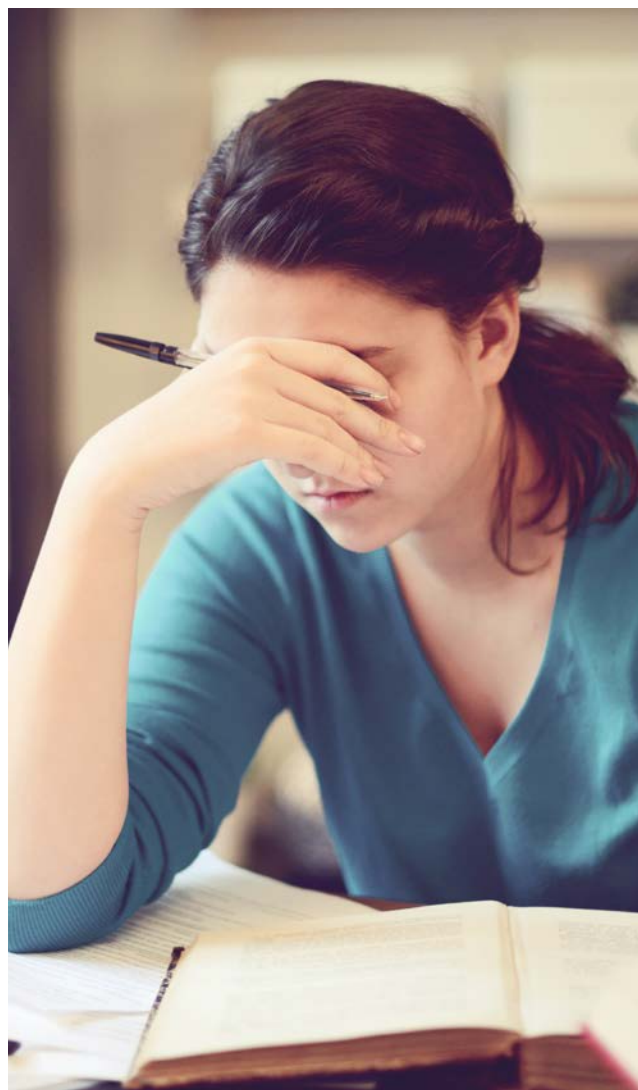
The standard's guidance on policies, practical actions, and workplace culture also acknowledges a diverse range of workplace settings and job roles. Hence, this standard is not only targeted at large organizations and office environments. For example, it also gives recommendations that are relevant to SMEs, outdoor settings, and highly physical roles. In addition, the standard's intersectional approach to menstruation and menopause transition recognizes that experiences are highly individualized but also can be shaped by factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disability. Finally, although the guidance focusses on supporting employees with their experiences of menstruation and menopause, the inclusive and open culture it promotes is of benefit to all employees.

The benefits of using the standard

Awareness of menstruation and menopause, the implementation of effective policies, and the creation of an inclusive workplace culture are vital to the retention and recruitment of staff.

When deciding whether to leave an employer, where to apply, or which job offers to accept, employees often consider whether workplaces are socially aware, diverse, and inclusive. Therefore, in environments in which there are skills shortages and recruitment challenges, the implementation of guidelines on menstruation and menopause can have a significant impact on whether employees decide to stay in their current workplace, or to which organizations they apply for work. Effective support for menstrual and menopausal experience can also improve the general wellbeing of employees and therefore lead to their having longer and more fulfilling careers. Furthermore, the standard recognizes that each stage of menopause transition may require different support or adjustment. For this reason, BS 30416:2023 uses the term 'peri/menopause' to signal that menopause is a transition rather than a short moment of time. This definition incorporates the different stages of menopause that medical practitioners refer to as 'perimenopause', 'menopause' and 'post-menopause'.

The standard also offers specific guidance to support employees whose menstrual and menopausal health significantly impacts their working lives. As menstrual health conditions and some symptoms of menopause can lead to absenteeism, presenteeism, and low satisfaction at work, they can have a negative impact on workplaces if adjustments are not made. This



can include the loss of experienced employees who add value to the company as well as the financial implications of absenteeism, employee tribunals, staff recruitment, and training new staff. This loss of time and resources could be avoided through following recommendations in BS 30416:2023.

How to implement the standard

BS 30416:2023 is applicable to all organizations, regardless of employee demographics, size, sector, or geographic location. It is not necessary to have an HR department or wellbeing team to support employees with their menstrual and menopausal experiences.

Indeed, small changes can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of employees who experience menstruation and menopause transition at work. It is important to include employees at all levels when creating guidance on menstrual and menopausal experiences so that changes are inclusive, impactful, and timely.

The standard offers in-depth information, diagrams and examples that can assist organizations in implementing changes that benefit the health and wellbeing of their employees. It includes a model that advises organizations on creating an inclusive workplace

culture through ongoing evaluations, metrics, and practical actions. Prior to taking practical actions, organizations should evaluate current levels of employee wellbeing and consider gaps. To monitor the impact of ongoing changes, organizations can collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. It is important that evaluation methods adopt an intersectional approach so that organizations understand how employees' experiences of menstruation and menopause in the workplace are influenced by factors such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and religion.

The standard divides the practical actions into five categories, each of which includes multiple recommendations that organizations can consider:

1 Physical aspects of work

Example: "Provide quiet spaces for short-term recuperation, rest and management of symptoms."

2 Policy guidance and practice

Example: "Consider how the organization's approach around menstruation and peri/menopause can be integrated into existing policies. A standalone policy benefits from cross referencing or merging a range of elements to improve inclusion of all employees, e.g. health and wellbeing."

3 Supportive workplace cultures

Example: "Set up informal support groups to discuss concerns or plan wellbeing activities."

4 Work design

Example: "Check the suitability of certain tasks and assess whether tasks can be re-allocated to lessen stress; such as by reducing front-facing hours or heavy lifting."

5 Inclusivity in menstruation and menopause at work

Example: "Use inclusive language throughout policies, promotional or network wellbeing events."

Although most of the recommendations in this standard would apply to all organizations, the standard also includes examples of adjustments for specific roles. The table of adjustments provides recommendations for static roles (such as a cashier), mobile roles without easy access to facilities (such as an electrician), highly physical roles (such as a warehouse operative), and for public-facing roles (such as a senior executive). The standard also includes a section that takes into

consideration how SMEs, such as those with a low budget and limited flexibility, can implement changes that benefit the menstrual and menopausal experience of employees. The annexes provide further practical actions, checklists, resources, and other recommendations. For instance, they include guidance on how to have a confidential conversation about menopause as well as how to ensure job descriptions are inclusive.

Challenges and pitfalls in using the standard

As research about menstruation and menopause transition is ongoing, knowledge about health, wellbeing, symptoms, effective treatment and the psychological impact of stigma will continue to evolve.

The language we use to communicate about menstruation and menopause in an inclusive manner may also change. The definitions and recommendations in this document may therefore require updating. Furthermore, there is always the risk that employers and employees can accidentally absorb and spread misinformation about menstruation and menopause. It is recommended that organizations seek the most up-to-date information and advice on how to support the menstrual and menopausal health and experiences of their employees.

Experiences of menstruation and menopause transition vary significantly between employees and can impact their working lives in different ways. Although BS 30416:2023 offers guidance on how organizations can be inclusive and take an



intersectional approach, organizations must build on and adapt the recommendations so that they are tailored to individual employees.

Wider context

Over the last few years in the United Kingdom, menstruation and menopause have become higher on the political agenda and increasingly visible in the media.

This change has been led by women's organizations, menstrual activists, and increasing research about menstrual and menopausal experiences. As a result of these efforts, awareness around menstruation and menopause has grown. Conversations in NGOs, parliaments, and in the media have emphasized the importance of establishing an inclusive, open and supportive, workplace culture around menstruation and menopause. It is therefore easier than ever before for employers to access information and speak openly about their employees' needs at work surrounding menstruation and menopause transition.

It is, however, important that organizations bear in mind that not all employees will be able to speak with confidence about their menstrual and menopausal experiences, be knowledgeable about how to manage symptoms, know how to access support, or (in the case of employees with menstrual health conditions) be receiving the medical care that they require. Furthermore, due to gendered ageism and other structural inequalities, some employees may not wish to disclose that they are experiencing menopause transition.

By implementing the standard's recommendations on menstruation and menopause in the workplace, organizations can therefore make an important contribution towards tackling gender inequalities. Adopting such guidelines in the workplace is therefore an important step towards a more equitable and just society.



Suggested next steps

If you are looking to implement policies and improve workplace culture around menstruation and menopause, it is recommended that you:

- **Distribute BS 30416:2023** to line managers, HR, Occupational Health, health and safety personnel (H&S), and diversity and inclusion specialists (D&I)
- **Begin, or continue to, encourage inclusive and open conversations** around menstruation and menopause in the workplace
- **Audit the workplace environment** to understand existing support for menstrual and menopausal experience, such as health and wellbeing, product provision, and awareness surrounding stigma and prejudice.
- **Conduct an initial evaluation** such as a gap analysis to determine the current level of wellbeing and satisfaction of employees
- **Add questions** about menstruation and menopause to existing wellbeing surveys
- **Analyse data** on recruitment, retention, and promotion
- **Adapt and implement** practical actions suggested in the standard
- **Continue to revise practical actions** via ongoing evaluation and metrics, and individual check-ins with employees

Further reading

BS ISO 25550, *Ageing societies – General requirements and guidelines for an age-inclusive workforce*

BS ISO 25551, *Ageing societies – General requirements and guidelines for carer-inclusive organizations*

BS ISO 45003, *Occupational health and safety management – Psychological health and safety at work – Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks*

BS ISO 45001, *Occupational health and safety management systems – Requirements with guidance for use*

BS EN IEC 60812:2018, *Design for the Mind – Neurodiversity and the Built Environment*

The Power of Standards, <https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards/explore-standards/the-power-of-standards/overview-guide-to-implementation/>

Other sources

Bobel, Chris et al. (2020) **'The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies**. Available at <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-15-0614-7>

The Daisy Network What is POI? Available at <https://www.daisynetwork.org/about-poi/what-is-poi/>

Endometriosis UK 'Endometriosis: Facts and Figures'. Available at <https://www.endometriosis-uk.org/endometriosis-facts-and-figures>

Equality Act 2010. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents>

NHS 'Overview: Menopause'. Available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

NHS 'PMS: Premenstrual Syndrome'. Available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pre-menstrual-syndrome/>

Owen, L. (2018) **Menstruation and humanistic management at work: The development and implementation of a menstrual workplace policy**, *Journal of the Association for Management Education & Development*, 25(4): 23–31.

Tomlinson, M. and Young, A. (2023) **'Using Social Media to Communicate Effectively with Young People about Menstruation'**. Available at <https://www.mariatomlinson.co.uk/files/ugd/96649be6c4bb9e6be34d2b9ee2f7aecb8195b9.pdf>



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Dr Maria Tomlinson is a Lecturer in Public Communication and Gender at the University of Sheffield. Maria’s research examines how NGOs, activists and journalists, communicate with the public about gender, health, and social inequalities. She has conducted Leverhulme-funded research on the impact of the media on young people’s knowledge and perceptions of the health and social issues around menstruation. Her published work includes the monograph, *From Menstruation to the Menopause: The Female Fertility Cycle in Contemporary Women’s Writing in French*. Maria chaired the committee for BS 30416:2023, which includes guidance that has been shaped by her research on public communication and menstruation.

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Working globally across a range of sectors – with specialist expertise in the sustainability and Environmental, Social and Governance, built environment, food and retail, and healthcare sector – BSI offers a range of services and solutions to make organizations worldwide more trusted and resilient. We adopt innovative technology and processes to offer our services in an efficient and effective manner, partnering with our clients to embed sustainable behaviours for the long-term benefit of their people, their customers, and our planet.



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