



What can be done to support neurodivergent employees during menopause? A guide for managers

How can employers make inclusive changes that are autism- and ADHD-friendly?

Four key points to remember:

- 1** Neurodivergent and neurotypical employees might have similar kinds of challenges at menopause, but for neurodivergent employees, their symptoms and difficulties might be much more extreme. Think “menopause on steroids”, a phrase we’ve heard from autistic people we’ve talked to.
- 2** Remember key areas of difficulty for autistic people and ADHDers: emotions, sensory sensitivities, executive function (e.g. time-keeping, organisation), socialising with peers and line managers. Neurodivergent employees might have been able to keep these challenges largely under wraps at work, but neurodivergent difficulties are exacerbated at menopause. These difficulties can cause employees to burn out.
- 3** You might have neurodivergent employees with existing reasonable adjustments in place prior to menopause, but their needs might change when they enter menopause – because the way they experience challenges associated with autism/ADHD has changed. They might not fully know what they need at menopause – after all, it’s new ground for them.
- 4** At menopause, some neurodivergent employees may be relatively new to realising that they are autistic/ADHDers: they may be newly diagnosed, seeking a diagnosis, or figuring themselves out while they decide what to do. The crucial thing is that, in addition to having to come to terms emotionally with this new information, they may not fully understand what support and reasonable adjustments they need.

Some autistic people have used the phrase “menopause on steroids”



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So what can you do to help?

- 1 Think about existing ways that your organisation is menopause-friendly, and be ready to extend or slightly adapt these on the basis of discussion with your neurodivergent employees. The intersection of neurodivergence and menopause is new ground for all of us – while we wait to get further insights from research, the most important thing we can do is listen to what neurodivergent employees need at menopause. Accept and respect that you might need to make exceptions from typical menopause policies – because these are NOT (neuro)typical circumstances. In particular, menopause is likely to affect the mental health of your neurodivergent colleagues more severely.
- 2 Explore recommended reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent people in the workplace. There are many excellent pages for:
 - Autism: [National Autistic Society](#); [Employment Autism](#); [Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services](#); [Autism Hampshire](#); [NHS England](#); [Neurodiversity Media](#)
 - ADHD: [The ADHD Foundation](#); [ADHD UK](#); [Scottish ADHD Coalition](#); [CHADD \(USA\)](#); [Neurodiversity Media](#)

Remember: they may have been able to get by without adjustments like this before, but their needs, and the way they experience their neurodivergence, has changed at menopause. Many employees may not really need adjustments that are designed for menopause and autism/ADHD: they may just need general autism/ADHD adaptations that they haven't previously needed.

The intersection of neurodivergence and menopause is new ground for us all - the most important thing we can do is listen to what neurodivergent employees need at menopause.



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- 3** Be aware that ADHD and autism often co-occur: employees may have difficulties associated with both of these conditions, so don't let reasonable adjustments be pigeon-holed by diagnoses.

From the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, here is [an excellent overview of adjustments for cognitive and emotional difficulties associated with many different forms of neurodivergence](#)

- 4** Do not wait for a diagnosis before putting in place reasonable adjustments that could maintain their health and workforce participation. It takes years through the NHS – and in many places, the NHS will not pay for adult assessments. Not everyone can afford to pay thousands of pounds for a private assessment.

Believe your employees if they think they might be neurodivergent: remember, we know for a fact that many neurodivergent adults were missed as children because understanding of neurodivergence is still so limited. Work with them now to maintain their health and participation in your workforce.

The number one thing to remember:

Reasonable adjustments should always be an ongoing conversation between you and the employee, not something that is 'done and ticked off'. This is new ground for you and for your neurodivergent and menopausal employee – they might struggle to tell you what they need, because they don't know themselves. Finding reasonable adjustments that work for each individual (because neurodivergent people are all so different) will likely be a trial and error process: trying typical adjustments for menopause, autism and/or ADHD, seeing how they work, and seeing how they could be fine-tuned.