



Health

A guide to men's and women's health in the workplace

The workplace guide to men's and women's health

While many medical conditions and life experiences can affect us all, some are unique to our biological makeup. These are often deeply personal, intimate issues that may not be easy to talk about. Particularly at work.

But from prostate cancer to fertility, and from menopause to breast cancer, they're also often the issues that matter to us most. Employees need to be able to talk about their wellbeing, manage their health and seek support, treatment and reassurance when they need to.

This guide is designed to help. It includes ideas and tips to make it easier for you to support your people and their families across a number of areas, from infertility to mental health. Help your employees feel their best – whatever that means to them – both in and out of work.



What impact does men's and women's health have on your business?

Seeking help, asking for time off or talking about a health concern isn't always easy for employees. Particularly when it comes to intimate issues that are specific to men's or women's health. Some may feel embarrassed while others don't know where to turn for support. And in some cases, people don't speak up because of stigma that can be attached to certain health concerns.

Whatever the reason, suffering in silence or waiting until a health issue becomes more serious can have a huge impact on an employee's life, both at home and at work. It can lead to mental health issues, which affect how people perform at work, as well as the need for more time off than may have been necessary with earlier intervention. Through recent AXA research and studies, we've found that one in five UK employees suffers with their mental health,¹ and the average number of days lost through sickness absence in 2022 was 6.1 per female worker and 5.2 for male workers.²

While personal health issues can have a hugely significant impact on any workplace, men and women typically hold different attitudes towards health and wellness. This can mean there are different challenges to overcome when engaging with employees and providing the best possible support.

Women's health

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- 85% of working-age women have experienced at least four women's health conditions.³
- Over a third (36%) of women felt their employers weren't supportive when it came to women specific health matters such as endometriosis, fertility, menopause and periods.²
- 57% of those who suffer period-related symptoms have even had to lie about their reasons for taking sick days.⁴
- The fear of hindering career growth (46%) and being forced to leave the workforce prematurely (48%) are among the top concerns for women.²
- This can then cause stress, with 90% of sufferers experiencing emotional job-related struggles.²
- 60% of women who talked about their health found their employers to be supportive, whether this be through time off, offering counselling or making adaptations to the workplace.²

One of the main challenges for businesses is not just to offer the right support for men's and women's health issues, but to create a culture of understanding and acceptance. For women, it's important they know their health issues are taken seriously and they'll be treated with the same level of care as with any other health concern.

Meanwhile men need to be encouraged to pay more attention to their health and empowered to look after themselves – whether that means taking time off to have tests and treatment, or simply making healthier choices.

¹ AXA UK Mind Health Report 2023 | ² AXA Health – The consequences of neglecting women's health in the workplace, AXA Health 2023 | ³ Make a Difference – Why It's Time To Normalise The Conversation Around Women's Health (quoting a Peppy, 2022 Women's Health study) | ⁴ DPG – Overcoming Period Stigma in the Workplace | ⁵ Men's Health Forum – Five surprising – and shocking – facts about men's health | ⁶ Employee Benefits – Men's Health

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Men's health

- Men are less likely to visit their GP than women.
- Among those aged 20-40, women attended a GP appointment twice as often.⁵
- 39% of employers said that male employees often wait until a health problem becomes severe before talking to their line manager or HR department.⁶
- 26% of employers said that presenteeism (coming to work despite not being physically or emotionally well enough to do so) was a major issue.⁶
- These trends are not only damaging to the individual, but they can also be disruptive in the workplace.

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Fertility



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

The impact on your people and your business



Around one in seven couples have difficulty conceiving.¹ And this isn't an issue that's specific to women's health, with men accounting for around half of infertility problems.²

Though it's not always possible to identify the reason, there are numerous possible causes of fertility problems for both men and women. These include:

Men

- Poor quality semen
- Low motility
- Damage or trauma to the testicles

Women

- Lack of regular ovulation
- Blocked or damaged fallopian tubes
- Endometriosis

Whatever the cause, fertility problems are confusing, stressful and something both men and women can experience, whether they're part of a couple or they've chosen to do it alone. While this can significantly impact their personal lives, with nine out of ten reporting feelings of depression,³ it could also impact their work.

Over one-third of employees undergoing fertility treatment consider leaving their jobs.³ Financial issues and feeling less engaged with work are problems for many, so workplace support can make a real difference.

Fertility

88% of people said they would change jobs for fertility benefits.⁴

¹ Infertility - NHS | ² Fertility Problems 2023 - The British Association of Urological Surgeons | ³ Fertility in the Workplace - Fertility Network UK | ⁴ Fertility at work study 2021 - Carrot Fertility and RESOLVE

Fertility

How your business
can help



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

Fertility

There are a number of things you can do to support anyone experiencing fertility concerns:

Ensure everyone is clear on employee entitlements

Make sure both employees and line managers are clear on their entitlements as well as the company’s policies around fertility. Although you aren’t legally required to offer anyone additional time off for fertility treatment, you should approach medical appointments or illnesses that arise as a result of treatment in the same way as you would any other appointments or sickness absence. Make sure everyone is aware of this as part of your onboarding and / or training processes.

Empower your line managers

It’s important that, when faced with a fertility related issue, your managers know how to approach the situation appropriately. When onboarding new managers, be sure to include training in this area to give them confidence in talking about fertility. This can also help break down barriers and remove stigma.

Consider a fertility policy

You can implement a fertility policy to help ensure a consistent approach throughout your company and encourage employees to talk more openly about any concerns they have.

Try to be flexible

IVF (in vitro fertilisation) appointments and follow-ups may need to be frequent and can be unpredictable. By being as understanding as possible to your employees’ needs, you’ll be able to help alleviate any stress they may feel about how to manage the process alongside other commitments.

Be mindful of the mental impact

Not only can fertility concerns be stressful, but treatment such as IVF can be all-consuming, both physically and mentally. Make sure your managers pay attention to your employees’ mental health and inform you of any indications that they may need extra support. Make sure managers encourage the use of your Employee Assistance Programme (if you have one) and that they consider using it themselves to talk through any concerns and get guidance.

Pregnancy and returning to work

The impact on your people and your business



Parenthood is one of life's most significant journeys. It can also pose unique and complex challenges, particularly for expectant mothers or new parents returning to the workplace.

According to the Office for National Statistics, three quarters of mothers (75.6%) with dependent children were in work in the UK in 2021. Meanwhile, 92.1% of fathers were employed.¹

The percentage of fathers in employment has always been high, while the percentage of mothers in employment has been steadily rising over recent years. In 2002, the number was 66.5%, so there's been an increase of almost 10% in the space of 20 years.¹

While there have been significant changes over recent years, other research suggests that there are still steps that need to be taken to provide more support for women returning to work.

- Two-thirds (67%) of women believe they have missed out on career progression in the last decade as a direct result of their childcare responsibilities.²
- 23% of parents using formal childcare have left their job or dropped out of education to avoid childcare costs.³
- 17% of women and 4% of men leave work for good in the five years following childbirth.⁴

Pregnancy and returning to work

Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

18% of parents have had to take on more work to pay for their childcare costs.³

¹ ONS – Families and the labour market, UK: 2021 | ² British Chambers of Commerce and Find Out Now - 4,100 respondents, Feb 2023 | ³ The cost of formal childcare – Theirworld in partnership with Hall & Partners, 2023 | ⁴ Understanding Society – How women's employment changes after having a child, 2019 | ⁵ Working Families Index 2022

Pregnancy and returning to work



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

How your business
can help



With such a high proportion of the workforce planning, starting or looking after a family, it's vital for businesses to be proactive, clear and flexible when it comes to supporting parents returning to the workplace. Not only to ensure they have a positive experience, but also to minimise disruption for their colleagues and the business as a whole.

From supporting female employees during pregnancy, to thinking about the help in place for expectant or new dads, your culture and approach to both maternity and paternity support can impact colleague engagement, recruitment and retention.

Flexibility

Flexible working arrangements can make all the difference to parents returning to work. It can minimise stress, make them feel more engaged and ensure a smooth transition. It can also foster a supportive culture in a workplace. 65% of parents agreed that flexible working arrangements had increased their loyalty to their employers.⁵ Line managers are key to successful flexible working.

Consistency

Implement clear and consistent maternity and paternity policies that are easy for employees to review without judgement. This makes sure everyone is treated fairly.

Assessments

Pregnancy is a significant physical undertaking for expectant mothers. When an employee lets you know they're pregnant, you should carry out a regulatory risk assessment to review work and check for any aspects of the job role that may have a negative impact on the pregnancy.

Support

Having a family presents new challenges and pressures as parents adjust to juggling work and home life. You can help minimise stress for your employees by having regular conversations about workloads and any adjustments they may need. Women can experience depression before, during and / or after pregnancy, while men can also experience depression and anxiety around the time of becoming a parent, which shouldn't be overlooked.

Pregnancy and
returning to work

¹ ONS – [Families and the labour market, UK: 2021](#) | ² British Chambers of Commerce and Find Out Now - [4,100 respondents, Feb 2023](#) | ³ [The cost of formal childcare](#) – Theirworld in partnership with Hall & Partners, 2023 | ⁴ Understanding Society – [How women's employment changes after having a child, 2019](#) | ⁵ [Working Families Index 2022](#)

Pregnancy and returning to work



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How your business can help – cont.



Stay in touch

Keep employees updated when they’re away. Employees are currently entitled to 10 keeping in touch (KIT) days to stay in the loop or keep in touch with the team when on maternity or adoption leave, as well as an extra 20 days during shared parental leave. Be proactive and think ahead about how these might be used, for example for key events.

Communication

Discuss what working arrangements employees may prefer when coming back to work. Some might favour a phased return or flexible arrangements, while others may wish to return to their previous work pattern. Each person is different, so try not to make assumptions and, again, be flexible when it comes to discussing different options. Some may have a good idea of what’ll work for them early on while others may need to adjust to being a parent first.

Planning

Make sure you have a good return-to-work plan in place and be clear about expectations. It can take people different amounts of time to adjust. Think about setting up a buddy to help with the transition and discuss any other requirements, such as arrangements to support breastfeeding.



Pregnancy and returning to work

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Endometriosis, PCOS and periods



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

The impact on your people and your business



One in ten women suffer from endometriosis, making it the second most common gynaecological condition in the UK.¹ And although awareness is growing, a 2020 All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) report, supported by Endometriosis UK, found that it takes an average of eight years to get a diagnosis.²

Meanwhile, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) affects an estimated 8 to 13% of reproductive-aged women worldwide, but up to 70% of those affected remain undiagnosed.³

These are common conditions that can impact every aspect of life, including a person's ability to contribute and thrive in the workplace. And, because it can take so long to reach a diagnosis (if at all), the impact can be felt for years and have long-term implications for the business, and for an individual's career prospects.

57%

of those who suffer period-related symptoms have had to lie about their reasons for taking sick days.⁴

Endometriosis, PCOS and periods

Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a condition where cells similar to the ones in the lining of the womb (uterus) are found elsewhere in the body. They act just like the cells in the womb, building up and then breaking down and bleeding away. But unlike the cells of the womb, which are able to leave the body as a period, these cells have no way to escape. This causes a number of symptoms, including:

- Chronic pain
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Depression
- An inability to conceive

Despite affecting one in ten women, diagnosis can be a long and frustrating process.

- In over 58% of cases, the sufferer visited their GP 10 or more times with symptoms.
- 53% went to A&E and 21% saw doctors in hospital 10 or more times.²
- 31% of sufferers have to reduce their working hours.²
- 28% have to change or leave their jobs.²

Endometriosis costs the UK economy

£8.2bn

a year in treatment, loss of work and healthcare costs.¹

¹ Endometriosis UK – [Endometriosis Facts and Figures](#) | ² Endometriosis in the UK: time for change – [Endometriosis APPG Report Oct 2020 \(pdf\)](#) | ³ World Health Organization – [Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁴ DPG research of 2,000 employees who menstruate, 2020 |

⁵ NHS – [Overview – Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁶ Department of Health & Social Care, England – [Women's Health – Let's talk about it' survey, Dec 2021 \(pdf\)](#)

Endometriosis, PCOS and periods



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

The impact on your people and your business – cont.



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Endometriosis, PCOS and periods

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

PCOS affects how the ovaries work. With many cases going undiagnosed, it's difficult to know exactly how many people have the condition, but it's thought to be around one in every ten women in the UK.⁵

The exact cause of PCOS is unclear, but it's a hormonal condition that involves symptoms such as:

- Missed or irregular periods
- Excess facial or body hair

- Thinning hair / baldness
- Weight gain
- Enlarged ovaries
- Difficulties getting pregnant

These physical symptoms, and the impact they have on mental health, can make it difficult for sufferers to focus at work and manage tasks in their professional lives. And, as PCOS often goes undiagnosed, women might put up with symptoms and suffer in silence, which can cause further stress.

¹ Endometriosis UK – [Endometriosis Facts and Figures](#) | ² Endometriosis in the UK: time for change – [Endometriosis APPG Report Oct 2020 \(pdf\)](#) | ³ World Health Organization – [Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁴ DPG research of 2,000 employees who menstruate, 2020 | ⁵ NHS – [Overview – Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁶ Department of Health & Social Care, England – [Women's Health – Let's talk about it' survey, Dec 2021 \(pdf\)](#)

Endometriosis, PCOS and periods



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

How your business can help



Both endometriosis and PCOS are relatively common, but they can take a long time to diagnose (or not get diagnosed at all). Part of the issue with these conditions – as well as any other issue relating to menstruation and periods – is that sufferers just aren’t comfortable talking about it.

48% feel that there’s noticeable stigma around period-related issues within their organisation,⁵ while 58% of women don’t feel comfortable talking about any female health issues in the workplace.⁶ So, there’s a lot of work for businesses to do to ensure all employees feel supported in this area.

Workplace culture

The first step is to create an open environment to encourage employees to talk freely about their health issues rather than ignoring them or hiding the reason for taking time off. Encourage open discussions about women’s health issues to break taboos and improve understanding throughout the organisation.

Support services

Make sure you have a wide range of health and wellbeing services in place. And then, be sure to direct your team members to those services as clearly as possible. They should never be in any doubt that you support their physical and mental wellbeing.

Reasonable adjustments

Open conversations can lead to a better understanding of an employee’s needs. From there, you can start making reasonable adjustments to their working environment or structure. An occupational health consultation can also help in this area. Possible adjustments could include flexible working hours, home working, getting special equipment and allowing time off for medical appointments.

Endometriosis, PCOS and periods

¹ Endometriosis UK – [Endometriosis Facts and Figures](#) | ² Endometriosis in the UK: time for change – [Endometriosis APPG Report Oct 2020 \(pdf\)](#) | ³ World Health Organization – [Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁴ DPG research of 2,000 employees who menstruate, 2020 | ⁵ NHS – [Overview – Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁶ Department of Health & Social Care, England – [Women’s Health – Let’s talk about it’ survey, Dec 2021 \(pdf\)](#)

Endometriosis, PCOS and periods



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

How your business can help – cont.



Clear policies

As with so many other sensitive health concerns, it's important to have clear policies in place to ensure everyone knows where they stand and feels comfortable seeking help. For some, it'll be directly relevant. For others it'll help normalise the topic and educate them which, in turn, can help reduce stigma and ensure fewer people suffer in silence.

Educate and support line managers

Line managers are often the first port of call for employees with health issues. They need to be trained in how to properly handle these enquiries, particularly when it comes to sensitive issues. They not only need to be clear on the company's policies and to have a good understanding of the sensitive issues that may be raised, but they need to be approachable and sympathetic.

Be flexible

No two cases will be the same so, while it's important to have a robust policy and support framework in place, it's just as important to be flexible at the same time. You need to be understanding of the emotional and mental impact these conditions can have on your employees. It's not always simple, but it can make all the difference.



Endometriosis, PCOS and periods

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¹ Endometriosis UK – [Endometriosis Facts and Figures](#) | ² Endometriosis in the UK: time for change – [Endometriosis APPG Report Oct 2020 \(pdf\)](#) | ³ World Health Organization – [Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁴ DPG research of 2,000 employees who menstruate, 2020 | ⁵ NHS – [Overview – Polycystic ovary syndrome](#) | ⁶ Department of Health & Social Care, England – [Women's Health – Let's talk about it' survey, Dec 2021 \(pdf\)](#)

Menopause

The impact on your people and your business



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

Menopause usually affects women between the ages of 45 and 55, though it can happen earlier.¹ Women in that age range make up a huge proportion of the UK workforce, which is why it's so vital for businesses to offer the right support. Research in 2019 found that 14 million working days per year were being lost to menopause symptoms,² so it's not hard to see why more and more businesses are keen to make sure their employees are supported.

Menopause is when a woman's periods stop due to their hormone levels becoming lower. This usually happens naturally due to age but can be brought on earlier by other reasons like surgery or genetics. Most menopausal women experience symptoms, including:

- Hot flushes and dizziness
- Difficulty sleeping and night sweats
- Irritability, low mood, anxiety, mood swings and low self-esteem
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things (brain fog)
- Headaches and migraines
- Muscle aches and joint pain

Symptoms will affect everyone differently, and to varying degrees, but they usually have a big impact on a woman's life, both at home and at work.

- Two-thirds (67%) of women in employment (aged 40 to 60) said their experience of menopausal symptoms had a mostly negative effect on them at work.³
- Over half (53%) can even think of a time when they couldn't go to work because of their symptoms.³
- 6% have left work and around one in six (17%) have considered leaving work due to a lack of support in relation to menopause.³

Offering the right support and creating an open culture are important so those suffering aren't reluctant to ask for help.

14 million
working days per year were being lost to menopause symptoms.²

Menopause

¹ NHS – [Overview: Menopause](#) | ² HR Review - [Menopause costs UK economy 14 million working days per year, 2019](#) | ³ CIPD – [Menopause in the workplace 2023](#)

Menopause

How your business
can help



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

Many women will experience menopausal symptoms at some point in their working life. By making a few simple changes to someone's working environment, you can make a real difference and enable them to continue performing and contributing to their full potential:

Menopause support

A good place to start is to put specialist support in place and make sure you communicate this throughout the business so managers and employees are aware of what support is available.

Flexible working hours

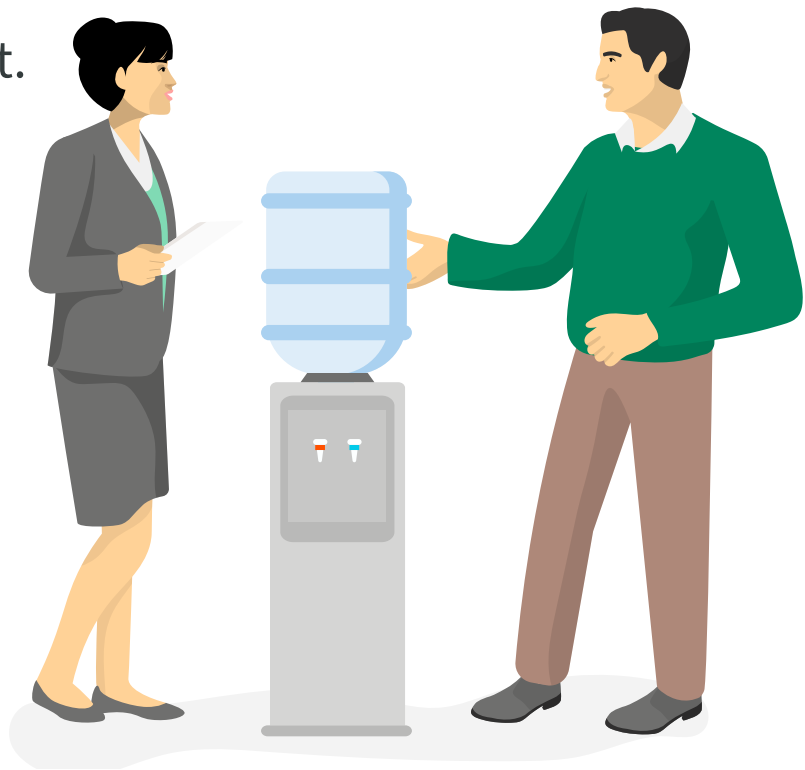
Symptoms like night sweats and disturbed sleep can badly affect work performance. Talk to your employee about whether flexible working times could help. They may benefit from having more breaks during the day or starting and finishing at different times. They may also need to leave work suddenly if their symptoms become severe.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that allowing flexible working can increase morale and productivity.

Practical improvements in the workplace

Hot flushes during menopause can spring up at any time. Every working environment is different, so you'll need to assess yours and make arrangements accordingly.

You could provide a desk fan, move the desk closer to a window or give your employee access to the air conditioning. You should also make sure there's easy access to cold drinking water and washrooms and, if relevant to your business, you could think about adapting uniforms to improve comfort.



Menopause

Menopause

How your business
can help – cont.



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

Psychological impact

Many women still feel uncomfortable discussing menopause symptoms. This can lead to them taking more time off than necessary or not taking enough. Both scenarios can impact their work performance, which can lead to stress and low self-esteem.

Feelings of stress can make menopausal symptoms worse. Having a clear written policy around flexible working and time off can reduce this stress, while helping to create an open culture where people feel comfortable asking for help. Conducting a stress risk-assessment can also be helpful.

Not just women are impacted

Often, women and their families struggle to understand menopause symptoms and can find it incredibly stressful. By encouraging an open environment where all employees feel safe to raise their concerns, you can help everyone.

Line manager support

Line managers don't need to be menopause experts, but it really helps if they have some knowledge and a supportive management style. This is important in building empathy, respect and trust, which can encourage your team members to open up about health issues.

Regular and informal one-to-ones can help open up a dialogue and create a forum for honest conversations. Line managers should ask questions and let employees speak rather than making assumptions. Every women experiences menopause differently, so the business needs to listen to them and adjust accordingly.



Menopause

¹ NHS – [Overview: Menopause](#) | ² HR Review - [Menopause costs UK economy 14 million working days per year, 2019](#) | ³ CIPD – [Menopause in the workplace 2023](#)

Mental health



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

The impact on your people and your business



Mental health conditions can range from common issues like anxiety and depression to severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. One in four people experience mental health issues each year, with one in six working-age adults experiencing symptoms associated with mental ill-health at any given time.¹

Symptoms of depression can include continuous low mood or sadness, feelings of hopelessness and low self-esteem, changes to sleep and appetite, and a lack of motivation and energy that can impact productivity.

People suffering with anxiety may experience symptoms that include restlessness, poor concentration, headaches, tiredness and feeling ‘on edge’ or agitated. Meanwhile, those with stress are likely to have problems sleeping, fatigue, muscle aches and digestive issues.

All of these symptoms have a significant impact on employee wellbeing and can have long lasting effects on their quality of life and overall health. This, in turn, affects their ability to work. In fact, mental health issues are a major cause of long-term absence from work, with work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounting for the loss of over 17 million working days in Great Britain in 2022/23.²

Work-related stress,
depression or anxiety affected
875,000
people in 2022 and 2023.²

Mental health

¹ MHFA England 2020 – Mental health statistics | ² HSE – Labour Force Study, from 2001/02 to 2022/23

Mental health



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

How your business can help



Whether mental ill-health is triggered by work or home life, the impact can be widespread. It's important to give the right support to staff with mental health issues to help them thrive. Good communication and people management skills can help prevent stress and poor mental health among employees – often it's about a common-sense approach.

Provide managers with mental health training

69% of UK line managers feel that supporting employee wellbeing is a core skill, but only 13% have received mental health training.¹

As symptoms aren't always overt, it's important for managers to know how to spot the early signs of stress and mental ill-health and have the knowledge to be able to support people. With the right education and training, managers can help employees feel more supported in the workplace.

Promote awareness of mental health issues across the workforce

Support awareness days and events throughout the year, reference mental health stories and campaigns in company communications, and offer education sessions to help reduce stigma and replace common myths with facts.

Understand what support services there are, internally and externally

It's important that employees are shown where to go for the right support, so having the knowledge and confidence to point them in the right direction is key. If your organisation has an EAP or in-house counselling service, make sure you communicate how and where they can access available support. There are also many charities and community support groups that you can signpost employees to.

Offer flexible working

Mental health is unique, and every person will have a different experience, so it's important to consider individual circumstances and needs. Flexible working may prevent stress or help people to cope better. If someone is returning to work, a gradual easing back may be appropriate – catch up with them before they return and perhaps speak to an occupational health adviser for support with next steps.

¹ MHFA England 2020 – [Mental health statistics](#) | ² HSE – [Labour Force Study](#), from 2001/02 to 2022/23

Cancer

The impact on your people and your business



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

Every year, more than 127,000 people of working age are diagnosed with cancer in the UK,¹ so there's every possibility it could affect your employees – whether directly or indirectly.

There are over 200 types of cancer, but just four types – breast, prostate, lung and bowel - together account for more than half of cancer cases in England up to 2020. And, while many types of cancer can affect anyone, some are specific to gender or are more common depending on our biological makeup.

For UK women, breast cancer is the most common, accounting for around 55,000 new cases every year.³ Meanwhile, for UK men, prostate cancer is the most common with around 52,300 new cases every year.⁴

A cancer diagnosis will have physical and emotional implications for your people and their families, friends and colleagues. It can impact all aspects of life, from energy levels and appetite to mental health and concentration. It can turn people's whole lives upside down, which could have a knock-on effect within your business too.



Cancer

¹ Cancer Research UK - [Cancer Awareness in the Workplace](#) | ² House of Commons Library - [Cancer Statistics for England, 2023](#) | ³ Breast Cancer Now - [Breast cancer facts and statistics](#) | ⁴ Cancer Research UK - [Prostate cancer statistics](#)

Cancer



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

How your business can help



It’s thought that around 40% of cancer cases among working aged people could be prevented.¹ And, of course, the earlier cancer is detected, the better the prognosis, so incorporating cancer awareness into your health and wellbeing programme could make a significant difference to your people.

But if a colleague or employee is diagnosed with cancer, it’s important to be able to support them practically and sensitively, while making sure managers understand the situation and know how to make any necessary adjustments.

Open communication

No two cancer experiences will be the same. Medical treatments and the subsequent physical and emotional reactions will vary from person to person, so it’s important to listen and try to understand their particular situation.

Ask if, how and what they want the rest of their team to be told. This can help them feel more in control over what is an intensely personal matter. Some may ask you to share the news on their behalf while others may want to tell colleagues personally. Equally, they may want to keep the details private, so respect any request for confidentiality and always be mindful that they may be in a state of shock after the diagnosis, so might not have all the answers yet.

Employees may need time off for appointments, treatment and recovery so let them know the arrangements for paid, unpaid and compassionate leave. Listen to what the employee needs and be flexible in the support you offer.

Occupational health

Cancer is legally defined as a disability from the point of diagnosis, so you might need to make adjustments to your employee’s working pattern or environment. If possible, involve occupational health as soon as you can so they can help advise you on what adjustments might be relevant. Your HR team can offer advice about if and how these can be implemented.

¹ Cancer Research UK - [Cancer Awareness in the Workplace](#) | ² House of Commons Library - [Cancer Statistics for England, 2023](#) | ³ Breast Cancer Now - [Breast cancer facts and statistics](#) | ⁴ Cancer Research UK - [Prostate cancer statistics](#)

Cancer

How your business
can help – cont.



Relevant AXA Health benefits and services

Stay connected

When an employee has cancer, they’ll need time off for treatment, recuperation and self-care. Speak to them and decide together how much contact they’d like with the team while they’re away. Some people like to remain in touch and even come in from time to time, while others need a clean break and clear separation. It’s individual, so it’s best to talk about it to find out what they would prefer. And, again, they may not know what they want right away and they could change their mind, so be flexible.

Catch up

If an employee’s been away for a period of time receiving treatment, talk to them before they return to work. By catching up with them before they come back, you’ll make them feel more confident and prepared. It gives them a chance to visit the workplace, hear important updates and raise any concerns. It also allows you to find out how they’re feeling, sort out any potential problems before they occur and understand what you need to do to ease them back into work.

Manage workloads

It can take time to recover from any serious illness and it’s likely to be a rollercoaster – psychologically, emotionally and physically. This could impact your employee’s ability to work efficiently, so you’ll need to closely monitor and manage their workload to ensure they can cope. It’s important that their work doesn’t cause excess stress but that they’re able to contribute and progress.



Our healthcare benefits and services

And how they can support your people

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Employee Assistance Programme



Employee Assistance Programme

An employee assistance programme (EAP) is an important source of support for all employees. It's thought that around 96% of businesses have one in place,¹ providing people with secure, remote access to mental health experts and other healthcare professionals.

At AXA Health, our EAP empowers your employees to manage their health and speak directly with qualified, experienced mental-health practitioners. Whether they need help navigating life-changing events or they're struggling with everyday challenges, they can call us 24/7.

Here's a sample of what our EAP can offer:

- Support and guidance to help your employees feel back in control.
- Assessment and signposting, alongside scheduled short term online or face-to-face counselling,² as part of EAP Premier.
- Practical, impartial and independent guidance from our team on a range of topics, from family care to tenancy rights.
- 24/7 access to our team of nurses, all year round via our health support line and email service. Midwives and pharmacists are available Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 8am to 4pm and Sunday 8am to 12pm.

Our EAP BeSupported portal is also packed full of help and guidance, and it gives members the option to chat with a counsellor online.

Our healthcare benefits

¹ 2022 REBA report - Employee Wellbeing Research 2022 | ² A cap on sessions per concern applies which can be negotiated with AXA Health.

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Mental health assessments and support



Mental health assessments and support

As we go through life, we can become mentally unwell just as we can become physically unwell. While mental health issues can affect anyone, they can also be linked to men's and women's health concerns. Everyone's experiences will vary, and they'll have different roads to recovery.

As part of our Advance corporate health benefits, our mental health assessments and support service enables members (aged 18 and over) to call us for fast, direct access to mental health professionals without having to get a GP referral first.

Whether they're anxious about something in particular or generally feeling down, a mental health expert will listen, point them in the right direction and ensure fast access to appropriate eligible care if it's needed.



Our healthcare benefits

Our healthcare benefits and services

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Thrive Mental Wellbeing

Thrive Mental Wellbeing

Thrive Mental Wellbeing is an app full of tools, techniques and content to help your people manage their wellbeing and find ways to cope better with life’s struggles.¹

With Thrive Mental Wellbeing, your employees can:

- Look after their mind health using proven behavioural tools that become part of their everyday routine.
- Manage their mood, better understand their stressors and find out whether they need more support.
- Learn effective psychological techniques and cognitive behavioural therapy-based interventions to better manage their wellbeing.

The app is designed to help people stay well and manage their wellbeing, as well as to offer support for mental health conditions. We can supply engaging communication material to help drive awareness amongst your employees and encourage your team to check in with the app regularly, rather than wait until they’re struggling.

Our healthcare benefits

¹ Thrive app users must be 14 or over.

Our healthcare benefits and services

And how they can support your people

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Here are some of the services we offer to help support your employees and line managers.

Fertility, early parenthood, menopause



Fertility, early parenthood and menopause

1/2

Wellbeing and healthcare benefits

When it comes to life’s big journeys, it can be hard to know who to turn to for guidance and support. Whether planning a family, becoming a new parent or going through the menopause, people can struggle to make sense of all the available information and guidance.

Working together with health app Peppy,¹ we give your employees the power to find their way more confidently through life’s most personal challenges. The fertility, early parenthood and menopause support services give your people, and their partners, direct access to expert support for the issues that really matter to them. The service includes:

- Confidential, one-to-one, 40-minute virtual consultations with one of Peppy's specialist practitioners. Menopause and fertility practitioners are available between 9am and 9pm, Monday to Friday, while early parenthood practitioners are available from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.
- In-app messaging chat with Peppy practitioners, without the need for an appointment.
- A rich library of resources, including expert articles, videos and an audio series as well as wellbeing courses and virtual events with expert speakers.
- Onward signposting to a GP if needed.

Our healthcare benefits

¹ Peppy app users must be 18 or over.

Our healthcare benefits and services

And how they can support your people

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Here are some of the services we offer to help support your employees and line managers.

Fertility, early parenthood, menopause



Fertility, early parenthood and menopause

2/2

Menopause specialist support

Most women find they can manage menopausal symptoms with the help of wellbeing support, information, advice and lifestyle changes. Most will be able to manage their symptoms with the support of their GP, however others may need more dedicated expert support.

If you choose to add menopause support to your AXA Health healthcare scheme, our network of British Menopause Society accredited consultant gynaecologists is available in-person or virtually to offer the right support to any employee that needs onward medical care. They'll just need a referral from a GP.



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Men's and women's health



Men's and women's health

Wellbeing support

Asking for help isn't always easy, particularly when it comes to intimate issues or conditions specific to men's and women's health. It can be difficult to discuss these concerns at work, and people may be reluctant to take time off to get the help they need, which can have a huge impact on their lives.

Together with health app, Peppy,¹ we're offering men's and women's health support services to help employees connect easily and confidentially to expert support, education and guidance for the issues that are most important to them. These services help your people take control of their wellbeing in a way that's comfortable and fits into their busy lives. The service offers access to:

- Confidential, one-to-one, 40-minute virtual consultations with specialist Peppy practitioners. Women's health practitioners are available between 9am and 9pm, Monday to Friday, and men's health practitioners from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Peppy practitioners can help employees manage physical and emotional symptoms and talk through their treatment options if needs be.
- In-app messaging chat with Peppy practitioners without the need for an appointment.
- A rich library of resources and programmes, carefully curated and aligned with NHS guidelines. The library includes wellbeing courses, expert articles and videos, an audio series and virtual events with expert speakers.
- Onward signposting to a GP for referral to specialist support if needed.

Our healthcare benefits

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Our healthcare benefits and services

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Cancer care



Cancer care

1/2

We understand the effect a cancer diagnosis can have on people and their families. That’s why cancer care is included in our Advance corporate healthcare cover.

Support at every stage of cancer

Our cancer care service is designed to provide dedicated care and support to your people and their families through the complex emotions and treatment journeys that follow a cancer diagnosis. Specific cover and eligibility details are in-line with the terms of your scheme, but no matter which level of cancer cover you choose, it’s a service that offers guidance, help and support from diagnosis through to treatment and beyond.

Our cancer care team is made up of nurses with oncology experience, supported by skilled case managers, all of whom specialise in cancer cases.

Health coaching for people with cancer

Employees undergoing cancer treatment can also get six months of supportive health coaching. The health coach will work with individuals to agree on goals which are personal to their situation. This could focus on anything from healthy habits and sleep to nutrition and exercise, helping to motivate them to achieve their goals and support their recovery.

Our healthcare benefits and services

And how they can support your people

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Cancer care



Cancer care

2/2

Fast access to diagnosis

We've also teamed up with Check4Cancer to offer members of our Advance scheme, aged 18 and over, fast access to diagnosis for several types of cancer without the need for a GP referral. These include:

- **Breast cancer** – Members who think they've spotted a sign of breast cancer can have fast access to a breast assessment without a GP referral – all necessary tests and an indicative outcome will be completed on the same day. From January to June 2023, 92% of members were offered an appointment within five working days.
- **Prostate cancer** – Men with raised PSA levels (a possible sign of prostate cancer) can call us without a GP referral and be directed to an initial assessment and the appropriate clinical route – either a multiparametric MRI (mpMRI) scan or a consultation.



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Occupational health



Occupational health

Create an environment that keeps your workforce well at work with effective occupational health support.

Whether working from home or on a factory floor, workplaces come in all shapes and sizes. We’ll work closely with you, your managers and HR department to identify what support you might need and develop solutions to help you and your people thrive at work – physically and mentally. So, whether an employee has a health concern that’s impacting their work, or they need help settling back in after an illness or operation, we’ll help you:

- Keep your employees healthy and safe while in work and manage any risks in the workplace that are likely to give rise to work-related ill health.
- Manage issues when they occur, with expert guidance for managers and employees on how to restore the appropriate relationship between their health and their work.
- Stay compliant and help your employees avoid work-related health issues with regulation-compliant health surveillance and fitness-for-work assessments.

Our occupational health service is led by clinicians, not processes. By providing clear, timely and impartial advice, we’ll help you get your employees back to work, while keeping your business compliant.

Our experienced occupational health team is backed by exemplary clinical governance and is SEQOHS accredited.

Our healthcare benefits

Our healthcare benefits and services

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Online GP service



Online GP service

Our AXA Doctor at Hand service, powered by Doctor Care Anywhere, lets employees speak to a medical professional and get the guidance and support they need without leaving the house or office.

The service enables them to book a video or telephone appointment with a qualified private GP or Advanced Nurse Practitioner – wherever they are and whenever they need it. GPs are available 24/7 and Advance Nurse Practitioners are available from 8am to 10pm. Appointments last up to 20 minutes.



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24/7 health support line



24/7 health support line

Health questions can crop up at any time, day or night. That’s why we have a team here that’s on hand to answer them.

Access to our 24/7 health support line and email service is included in our Advance private healthcare schemes, and available to your employees and their families. Nurses and counsellors are available 24/7/365. Midwives and pharmacists are available Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm, Saturday 8am to 4pm and Sunday 8am to 12pm.



Our healthcare benefits

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Health coaching



Health assessments and coaching

It’s important to understand our health status and have the skills to improve it when we need to. But sticking to any positive changes we make can also be a real challenge. Our health assessments and health coaching programmes are here to help empower your employees to live healthier lives.

Health assessments

The health assessments we offer support referrals to onward coaching. They include ‘know your numbers’ or ‘wellbeing consultations’ allowing employees to better understand their health status and set personal goals.

Health coaching for mind and body

From weight loss to stress management and from exercise to better sleeping habits, our health coaching service is designed for those who still need a little extra motivation to make positive lifestyle changes. They may have had a health risk identified through one of our health assessments or by their GP, or they may just want a bit of extra help in managing their overall wellbeing.



Our healthcare benefits

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Wellbeing seminars



Wellbeing seminars, workshops and training courses

Learning the value of good health and wellbeing empowers both people and business alike.

Our seminars, workshops and training courses are designed to help build awareness and, through education, help employees and line managers flourish and reach their potential.

At the centre of every team is a leader or a line manager, juggling responsibilities and supporting those around them. Our courses help them learn to be capable, confident and connected across a range of wellbeing topic areas, so they in turn can help unwrap the value of health and wellbeing across your organisation.

We cover a wide range of topics, from menopause awareness and education to managing sensitive conversations. Combine our wellbeing seminars, workshops and training courses to complement your existing wellbeing programme.



Our healthcare benefits

Further reading

Mental Health

Cancer

Fertility, early parenthood and menopause

Work / life balance

Health and wellbeing



Health

**For more information about any of
our services please contact your
account manager or your intermediary**

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