



HELLO SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE



Hi!

How great that you're interested in learning more about menstruation and menopause from a workplace perspective!

In this informational brochure, we clarify:

- how menstruation and menopause are connected to workplace issues,
- how shortcomings in the work environment can negatively affect employees who menstruate or are going through menopause,
- and how this ties into your role as a safety representative.

This brochure was created by Klara Rydström, Rebecka Hallencreutz, and Josefin Persdotter as part of MENSEN's initiative "Ett MENSkligare Arbetsliv" (A More Period-Friendly Workplace) supported by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency.

Illustrations by Lovisa Zacrisson.

MENSEN is a non-profit organization advocating for so-called menstrual rights: ensuring that everyone who menstruates has access to and can afford menstrual products, possesses knowledge about their body, benefits from infrastructure that meets their hygiene needs, and experiences supportive norms.

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Menstruation, Menopause, Workplace Environment, and Discrimination

Menstruation and menopause have long been overlooked as workplace issues, but this is starting to change. More and more workplaces are recognizing the value of making adjustments to support employees who menstruate or are going through menopause. Such efforts focus on preventing health issues and discrimination, ensuring equal working conditions, and creating an attractive and inclusive workplace where employees thrive and are given the best possible conditions to focus on their tasks. Employees' needs related to menstruation and menopause vary depending on the individual, industry, and role. However, there are recurring problem areas in many workplaces, such as:

- lack of access to period products, pain relief, and rest areas,
- issues with temperature and ventilation that exacerbate discomfort,
- difficulty taking breaks or pauses when needed,
- poorly designed work clothing,
- widespread ignorance about symptoms related to the menstrual cycle and menopause,
- employees enduring derogatory language, with HR and managers trivializing this topic.

Workplace issues related to menstruation and menopause are clearly connected to broader work environment matters such as restroom facilities, workload, communication culture, gender equality, and supportive leadership.

"Sometimes, there haven't even been toilets available... I work under someone responsible for this, among other things, but they don't take it seriously or fix the problem. Guys just pee in the bushes, while women have to hold it in"

"I've also experienced male colleagues saying, 'Are you on your period or something?' when I've assigned them a task or similar"

Since the majority of people with a menstrual cycle are cis women*, there are also connections between menstruation and discrimination. If a superior says, "Are you on your period or something?!" to an employee in a bad mood, it might be perceived as an innocent comment. However, it is a form of harassment that can be linked to the discrimination ground of gender.

*To be cis-gender person means identifying with the gender assigned to you at birth, the opposite of a transgender person.

Here's what you can do as a safety representative:

It's important to remember that the employer is responsible for the work environment at the workplace. The employer must work systematically to prevent ill health and accidents and ensure a safe and healthy work environment (AFS 2001:1). According to the Discrimination Act, employers are also obligated to prevent discrimination in the workplace (2008:567).

As a safety representative, you can ask questions to your employer and point out if something isn't right:



Ask your employer what is being done as part of the systematic work environment efforts to meet the needs of employees who menstruate or are going through menopause.



Ask your employer what is being done as part of the active measures to prevent discrimination against employees who menstruate or are going through menopause.

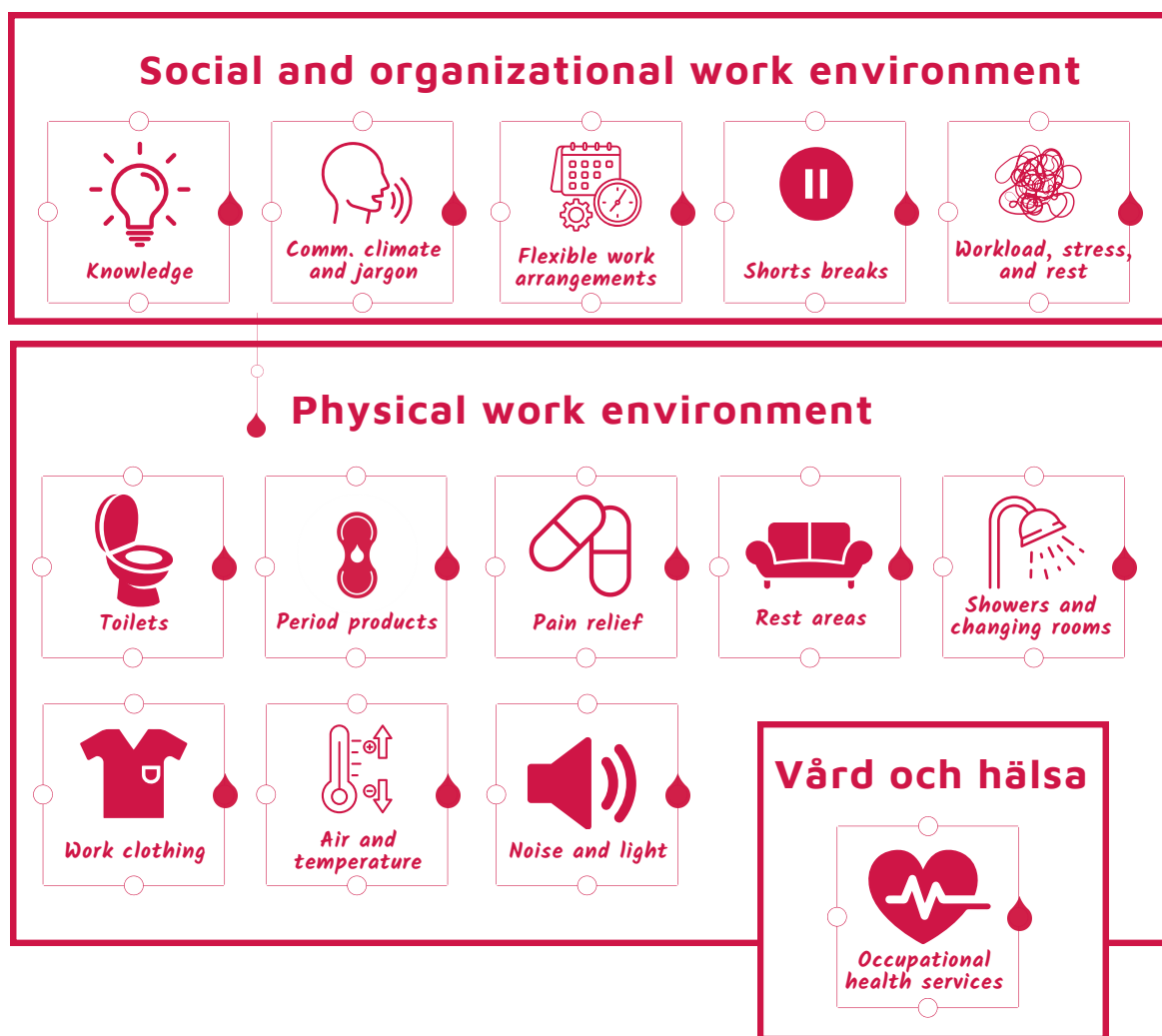


Bring to your employer's attention any shortcomings in the work environment that affect employees who menstruate or are going through menopause. For example, if there are no toilets, sinks, or period products, if high workload prevents you from taking bathroom breaks, or if there are "jokes" about menstruation.

As a safety representative, you have the right to participate in so-called safety inspections, where the work environment is reviewed. During these inspections, a checklist is often used to ensure that relevant areas are examined. On the following pages, you will find inspiration for the safety inspection and examples of questions you and your employer can ask.

MENSEN's checklist for safety rounds

The checklist has been developed by MENSEN as part of the project "A More Menstrual-Friendly Workplace." It is based on Swedish work environment legislation, research on menstruation and menopause adaptations in worklife, MENSEN's accumulated experience, material from Prevent, statements from the Swedish Work Environment Authority, and related international guidelines. The long version of our checklist is available in Swedish on our website www.mensen.se.



Workplaces have different conditions, and you can choose how to use the checklist in your specific context. For example, you can conduct a targeted safety round where you go through all the sections, or you can highlight specific questions or sections that you know are relevant to your workplace and integrate them into regular safety rounds. On the next page, you'll find a suggestion for a shorter checklist.

SHORT CHECKLIST FOR SAFETY INSPECTION

Workplaces have different conditions and varying abilities to check off each item. Use the list as a tool to conduct a current state analysis and identify potential improvements specific to your workplace. A longer and more detailed checklist in Swedish is available on our website.

- Employees have access to restrooms during working hours.
- Employees are allowed to use the restroom, take breaks, or rest as needed.
- A sink and waste bin are available near the restroom.
- The workplace provides sanitary pads and tampons close to the restroom, or there is clear information on where they can be collected.
- There is a routine in place to ensure sanitary products are restocked and restrooms are cleaned according to a set schedule.
- All employees have access to separate and well-maintained showers.
- The workplace offers a comfortable and accessible space for breaks and rest.
- Employees who wear work clothing have access to changing facilities when needed, in a private and secure environment.
- Work clothing is designed according to the preferences and needs of the employees.
- There is an open and supportive atmosphere where employees feel comfortable discussing their well-being.
- The workplace provides free painkillers, and other aids to alleviate pain.
- Management and occupational health services have knowledge about how the menstrual cycle and menopause can affect health and well-being.
- Employees have the option to work from home or another location when needed.
- Employees are offered flexible working hours and the opportunity to make up lost time at a later date.
- The workplace ensures that thermal comfort is regularly evaluated, and individual adjustments are made as needed to promote a good working environment.
- Meeting times and shifts are planned with consideration for employees who experience sleep difficulties, ensuring they have sufficient opportunities for rest and recovery.

