



What Employers Need to Know about Menstruation in the Workplace

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Abstract

Employers who prioritize understanding and accommodating menstruation in the workplace foster a more inclusive and supportive environment. Providing flexible work arrangements, addressing stigma, ensuring access to necessary products, and developing clear policies are essential steps toward creating a workplace where everyone can perform their best, regardless of their menstrual health. Menstruation can have significant effects on employees' physical and mental well-being, which can, in turn, affect their work performance. When employees are struggling with symptoms like cramps or fatigue, they may find it difficult to concentrate or work efficiently. This can lead to increased absenteeism, presenteeism (showing up to work but not being fully productive), or even disengagement. Employers who understand these challenges can provide the necessary support to mitigate these impacts and foster a positive, inclusive work culture. When employers show empathy and awareness about menstruation, employees are more likely to feel supported and valued, which can enhance overall job satisfaction and performance. Additionally, creating clear, supportive workplace policies regarding menstruation is essential. These policies can include flexible sick leave, menstrual leave options, or simply more understanding of absences related to menstrual health. Additionally, employers should train managers to be empathetic and non-judgmental when handling requests related to menstruation. When managers show understanding, it fosters a culture of respect and support.

Keywords: Menstruation; Work Place; Culture of Respect

Introduction

Menstruation is a natural biological process that affects millions of employees around the world. However, despite its frequency and significance, it remains a topic that is often overlooked or misunderstood in the workplace. Employers need to recognize the importance of creating a supportive environment for menstruating employees [1].

Understanding Menstruation: The Basics

Menstruation, or a woman's monthly period, typically lasts between three to seven days, during which time

employees can experience symptoms such as cramps, fatigue, headaches, and mood swings. These symptoms can impact their comfort, focus, and performance at work. It is essential for employers to recognize that periods are a part of life and that employees may require accommodations during this time [2].

Legal Considerations: Your Responsibilities as an Employer

Employers must be aware of the legal framework surrounding periods in the workplace. In many countries, there are laws in place that protect the rights of workers to



ensure that they are not discriminated against due to their biological processes, including periods.

For instance, in the United States, the Equality Act and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act require employers to accommodate the health conditions related to periods, especially if an employee experiences extreme discomfort or related conditions like endometriosis or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

Encourage Open Communication

Employees should feel comfortable discussing their menstruation-related needs without fear of embarrassment or discrimination. Employers should encourage open communication about the challenges employees may face during their menstrual cycle. This could include offering private channels for employees to speak to HR about any discomfort they might experience during this time.

Offer Flexible Working Hours

Period symptoms can vary greatly between individuals, and some employees may experience a drop in productivity during the first few days of their cycle. Offering flexible working hours can be a great solution for employees who may need extra time to recover or manage their symptoms.

Provide Access to Menstrual Products

Access to menstrual products is essential to supporting menstruating employees. Offering free access to tampons, pads, menstrual cups, or other menstrual products can alleviate any concerns employees may have about the embarrassment or cost of acquiring these products during their workday. It is also very good and very hygiene practices to follow [Natural period protection](#). So choose yours wisely.

Consider Paid Leave for Menstrual Health

Offering paid leave specifically for menstrual health can be a valuable benefit for employees. While some countries and regions have not yet implemented paid menstrual leave, several progressive companies have begun introducing policies that allow employees to take leave for their menstrual health, ensuring that they don't have to choose between rest and income.

Menstrual Leave (Where Applicable)

Some countries or companies offer menstrual leave, which allows employees to take leave for severe menstrual symptoms. If applicable, employers should clearly communicate this benefit to employees and ensure it is used without fear of discrimination or bias. Even without formal

menstrual leave policies, offering sick leave that can be used for menstrual-related health issues is a supportive practice.

The Importance of Creating an Equal and Respectful Workplace

Menstruation is an aspect of biological diversity that should be respected and normalized in the workplace. Employers who create an equal and respectful workplace for menstruating employees foster a culture of trust, inclusivity, and support. This can have a positive impact on employee engagement, retention, and overall company success.

Health and Hygiene Considerations

Employers should provide access to clean and well-maintained restrooms and sanitary products (e.g., pads, tampons) to employees. In some workplaces, vending machines or free supplies may be appropriate. Some companies provide paid or free menstrual products to employees as part of a broader commitment to health and wellness.

Educational and Training Programs

It can be beneficial to include information about periods in broader health and wellness programs. Educating managers and employees about the potential impact of menstruation can reduce stigma and ensure that menstruating employees feel supported. Awareness campaigns or resources can also provide information about how employees can manage symptoms and what accommodations are available to them.

Workplace Accommodation

Employers should consider providing accommodations to employees who experience challenging symptoms. This might include flexible work hours, work-from-home options, or access to quiet spaces to manage symptoms. Employers can also consider implementing policies that allow employees to take time off if needed, without facing stigma or discrimination.

Conclusion

Employers play a critical role in creating a workplace environment that acknowledges and supports menstruating employees. By understanding the significance of periods and providing accommodations such as flexible work hours, access to menstrual products, and paid leave, employers demonstrate their commitment to employee well-being and inclusivity.

References

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