

HOT FLUSH, COLD SHOULDER

What Your Employer Won't Tell You
About Menopause at Work

YOUR RIGHTS UNDER UK LAW, THE CASES
THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING, AND THE EXACT
WORDS TO GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED.



**KNOW YOUR
RIGHTS**



**SAY IT WITH
CONFIDENCE**



**KEEP YOUR
CAREER**

UPDATED FOR
THE EMPLOYMENT
RIGHTS ACT 2025

**SCRIPTS &
TEMPLATES**

BEFORE YOU START

A Quick, Important Note

Hot Flush, Cold Shoulder is an educational guide. It explains, in plain English, how existing UK employment and equality law can protect women experiencing perimenopause and menopause at work, and it shares practical steps, scripts and templates to help you use those protections.

It is not legal advice, and it can't replace advice about your own situation. Every job, contract and employer is different, and the outcome of any dispute depends on its specific facts.

The law described here applies to England, Wales and Scotland. Northern Ireland has its own employment law, and some rules differ.

Employment law in the UK is changing in stages under the Employment Rights Act 2025. Everything in this guide was checked against official sources in September 2026. Some dates in this guide are still "expected" rather than final. Before you rely on a deadline, always check the current position with Acas (acas.org.uk, 0300 123 1100) or on gov.uk.

If you are thinking about leaving your job, raising a formal complaint or making a tribunal claim, please get free advice first — from Acas, Citizens Advice, your trade union or an employment solicitor.

If your symptoms are severe or worrying, or your mood is low and not lifting, please speak to your GP or contact NHS 111.

The author is not a lawyer or a doctor. This guide was written to turn official guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Acas, gov.uk and the NHS into clear, practical steps — and to help you have better-informed conversations at work.

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INTRODUCTION

You're Not Imagining It — and You're Not Alone

You used to be the one who remembered everything. The dates, the figures, the name of the client you met once three years ago. Now you walk into a meeting and the word you need simply isn't there. You feel the heat rising up your neck in the middle of a presentation and you know — you just know — that everyone can see it. You've been awake since 3 a.m., soaked through, and you're expected to be sharp, calm and "on it" by nine.

And then there's the part nobody talks about. The comment from a colleague about "hormones". The manager who notices you've been off sick twice this quarter and books you in for a "quick chat". The quiet feeling that you're being looked at differently. That you're one bad month away from a performance plan.

If any of that sounds familiar, you are not imagining it, and you are very far from alone. In a 2023 survey by the CIPD, the professional body for HR, two thirds of working women aged 40 to 60 who had experienced menopause symptoms said those symptoms had a mostly negative impact on them at work. Nearly four in five said they struggled to concentrate. A 2026 survey of 2,000 working women by Benenden Health found that almost half had already changed the way they work to cope — cutting their hours, handing back responsibilities, or turning down promotion and training.

Here is the painful part. In the same research, 92% of HR decision-makers said their organisations were meeting the needs of staff going through menopause. Yet 40% of women said they didn't know about any menopause policy at their workplace, and fewer than half felt comfortable telling their manager about their symptoms.

That gap — between what employers think they're doing and what women are actually living through — is the "cold shoulder" in the title of this book. Nobody is necessarily being cruel. Most managers simply don't know what to say, and most women don't know what they're entitled to ask for. So the

silence wins. And too many capable, experienced women quietly step back, or step out, at the very peak of their careers.

This book exists to break that silence — with facts.

What you'll find in this guide. You won't find vague encouragement to "look after yourself" or "speak up". You'll find the actual law that already protects you, explained in plain English. You'll find real tribunal cases where women who were treated unfairly won — and cases where they lost, and why. You'll find the new rules coming in under the Employment Rights Act 2025, and what they mean for you in practice. And you'll find exact words: scripts for talking to your manager, a template letter for requesting changes, a step-by-step path for when your employer says no.

What this guide is not. It isn't a promise that your employer must give you everything you ask for. The law doesn't work like that, and anyone who tells you otherwise is setting you up for disappointment. It's also not a substitute for legal advice if things have already gone badly wrong. What it will do is make sure you walk into every conversation knowing where you stand — and that changes everything about how those conversations go.

How to use this book. You can read it from cover to cover, or go straight to the chapter you need today. Every chapter ends with two things:

- **Do This Today** — one concrete action you can take right now.
- **Your Questions Answered** — short, direct answers to the questions women ask most about that topic.

Chapter 9 is your toolkit: a symptom and work diary, template emails and letters, and checklists you can print or copy. At the end, you'll find a full FAQ and a list of official sources, so you can check anything for yourself.

One more thing before we start. Needing support during menopause isn't a weakness, and asking for it isn't making a fuss. It's using the rights that already exist — rights that were written for exactly this kind of situation. Let's make sure you know what they are.

CHAPTER 1

Is It Menopause — or Is It Me?

Before we get into the law, we need to talk about what's actually happening to you — because you can't ask for the right support until you can name the problem clearly. And because, as you'll see in Chapter 2, the way your symptoms affect your daily life is exactly what the law looks at.

Perimenopause is the stage when your hormone levels start to change but your periods haven't stopped yet. It often begins in your 40s, although for some women it starts earlier. Menopause itself is the point when you haven't had a period for 12 months; in the UK it usually happens between 45 and 55. According to the NHS, symptoms often last around four years after your last period, but for some women they continue for much longer. For a working woman, that isn't a bad week. It can be several years of your career.

The symptoms that hit hardest at work. The NHS lists a wide range of physical and mental symptoms. Here are the ones women most often say affect their working day, and how they tend to show up:

- **Brain fog, memory lapses and poor concentration** — losing words mid-sentence, forgetting deadlines, rereading the same email three times, struggling in meetings.
- **Hot flushes and night sweats** — sudden heat, flushing and sweating during the day; broken sleep at night that leaves you exhausted by morning.
- **Sleep problems and fatigue** — waking at 3 a.m. and not getting back to sleep, which then drains energy and patience for the whole day.
- **Anxiety, low mood and loss of confidence** — feeling on edge before meetings, doubting decisions you'd once have made without thinking, tearfulness that feels out of character.
- **Heavy or irregular periods** — flooding without warning, needing frequent access to a toilet, worry about leaks in uniform or on long shifts.