



# Spirax Group: Menopause and Positive Menstrual Health at Work

CASE STUDY

Author: Nell Osborne  
April 2024



# Spirax Group: Menopause and Positive Menstrual Health at Work

## SUMMARY

In 2022 Spirax Group created global menopause-friendly workplace principles: aiming to help create workplaces and a working culture where anyone experiencing menstruation or menopause is supported in the best way.

As part of this initiative, a menstruation and menopause toolkit was developed. This was shared internally with colleagues via webinars, and specific training sessions were held with managers in order to raise awareness of the topic and the toolkit. As a Group-wide project and commitment, this is starting new conversations on the topic and helping to address the stigma and culture of silence around the topic of menstrual health, both within Spirax Group and by sharing resources with other organisations.

This case study will:

- give you an understanding of how the menopause impacts the working lives of women and those experiencing menopause
- provide you with an understanding of how Spirax Group's menstruation and menopause toolkit was developed and disseminated
- outline the impact of the toolkit
- give you guidance and tips to foster an inclusive menopause-friendly workplace

# The Impact of the Menopause at Work

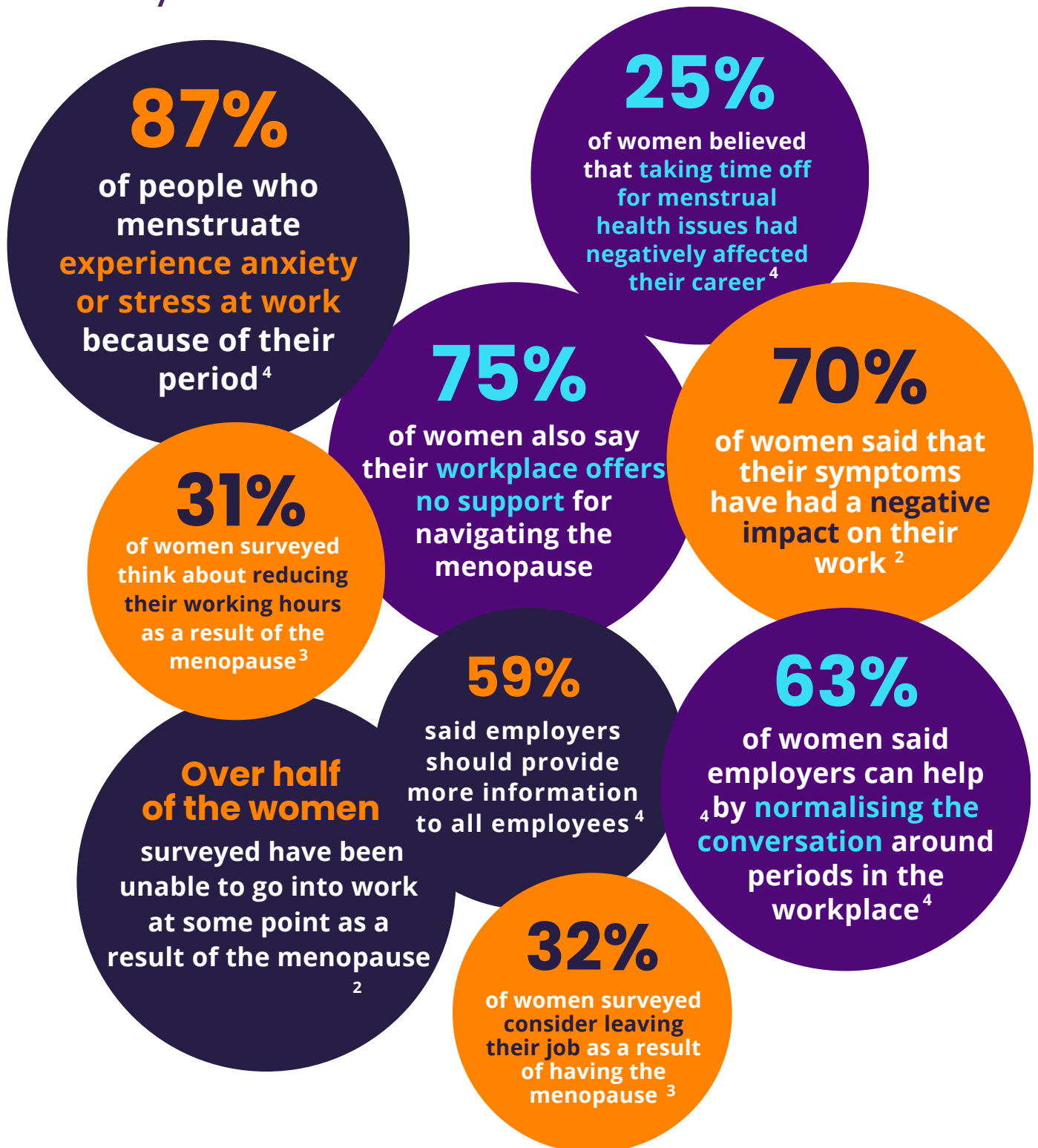
Until very recently, the menopause and the impact of navigating its many challenging symptoms has not been a topic for open discussion in the workplace. This stigma persists, even though the menopause journey is experienced by around 50% of the population. There are many different symptoms associated with the menopause, which can last for up to 7 years, but each person's experience of this normal and healthy part of life is different.

***However, in one survey, 65% of women reported that they experienced concentration loss; 58% experienced greater stress<sup>1</sup>. The menopause often intersects with a critical stage in many women's career progression, just as they are likely to be moving into leadership positions – the menopause typically occurs between ages 45 and 55.***



1. ["Menstruation and Support at Work"](#), CPID, November 2023.

## Why Does It Matter?



2. Ibid.

3. "Menopause and The Workplace", Fawcett Society, 2022.

4. "Bloody Good Research: Periods and Menstrual Well Being in The Workplace – The Case for Change", Bloody Good Employers, January, 2021.



## About Spirax Group

Spirax Group (the new name for Spirax-Sarco Engineering Plc) is a global thermal energy and fluid technology solutions Group, positioned to play a critical role in enabling the industrial transition to net zero, in support of its Purpose, to create sustainable value for all its stakeholders, by engineering a more efficient, safer and sustainable world.

The Group's solutions improve the operating efficiency and safety of the critical industrial processes that sit behind the production of consumables used every day. It's recently launched new-to-world decarbonisation\* solutions use proprietary technologies to electrify boilers, for the raising of steam, as well as the electrification of other critical industrial process heating applications.

### The Group comprises of three world-leading businesses:

#### Steam Thermal Solutions

Steam Thermal Solutions helps customers control and manage steam within their mission critical industrial applications, such as cleaning, sterilising, cooking and heating. We are helping to put food safely on the world's tables and keeping hospitals running.

#### Electric Thermal Solutions

Electric Thermal Solutions has proprietary technologies that deliver electrification solutions at scale in industrial settings, including for the raising of steam, supporting our customers to achieve their net zero goals. We also deliver freeze protection and defrost solutions critical to aviation and space industries and ensure thermal uniformity in Semiconductor chip manufacturing to power the critical electronic systems we rely on.

#### Watson-Marlow Fluid Technology

Watson-Marlow Fluid Technology Solutions is engineering vital fluid technology solutions that optimise the efficient use of resources and support advancements in global health, such as lifesaving vaccines and gene therapies.

Spirax Group is a FTSE 100 Company headquartered in Cheltenham (UK). It has 37 strategically located manufacturing plants around the world and is committed to creating a safe and inclusive working culture for its 10,000 colleagues, operating in 66 countries, and serving 110,000 customers globally. The Group joined WISE in 2022 to help continue the progress it is making on its inclusion journey.

\* Eliminates scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions when connected to a green electricity source.

## Spirax Group's Inclusion Plan: Everyone is Included

In 2022, Spirax Group launched an industry-leading Group-wide Inclusion Plan, 'Everyone is Included'. This includes ten Group Inclusion Commitments which aims to benefit colleagues globally. Commitments included a minimum global standard of 16 weeks paid gender-neutral parental leave, 15 days of paid caregiver leave every year and 'safe leave' support for colleagues experiencing domestic violence or abuse. The plan also included a commitment to:

*Create menopause-friendly workplaces through new global principles to ensure anyone experiencing menopause feels safe, and is treated fairly, respected and appropriately supported.*

This commitment was organised around **four core tenets**

### CONTEXT

Wherever we work, we will support all colleagues experiencing menopause in a way that recognises and respects the uniqueness of their personal situation

### FAIR TREATMENT FOR ALL

Our policies and procedures must ensure that colleagues experiencing perimenopause or menopause are not disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their symptoms

### IMPORTANCE OF OPEN CONVERSATIONS

Colleagues experiencing symptoms are encouraged to let their manager know if this may impact their work. If they are uncomfortable discussing this with their manager, they can also talk to local HR teams

### PRACTICAL WORKPLACE SUPPORT

Appropriate support can include identifying adjustments to the working environment or working patterns

## Starting the Conversation, Changing the Culture

Lauren Chiren, founder of [Women of a Certain Stage](#), held a training session for all colleagues across Spirax Group ('The Case for Being Menopause Savvy') in November 2021, which emphasised the clear business case for creating a menstrual-friendly workplace.

Colleagues also began building up a library of resources made available to all through the Group's Learning & Development platform, 'SPARK', which launched globally in 2023. The Menopause Learning Sessions ran by Lauren Chiren are available as recordings there, to view at any time, and are already being utilised by colleagues.

## Developing the Toolkit



With external research in mind, the Group set out to 'normalise' the conversation around menopause and menstrual health through creation of a set of global principles and a related toolkit.

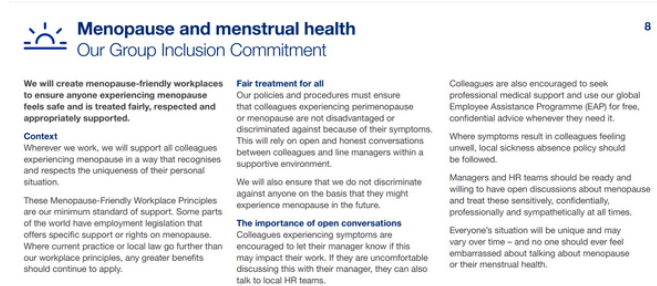
Darren Towers, Head of Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing, in Spirax Group's HR team worked with volunteers from the Spirax Group Women's Global Network and with external expert, Lauren Chiren, to create these 'Menopause-friendly workplace principles'.



This 13-page menopause and menstrual health toolkit clearly sets out how managers, HR, facilities teams and colleagues can collaborate to create workplaces and working culture where anyone experiencing menstruation or menopause is supported in the best way.

The toolkit describes the principles, explains why this support is needed, details its menopause and menstrual health Group Inclusion Commitment, and directs readers to resources where they can learn even more about the topic.

It is written in accessible style and has been translated into the 14 core languages spoken across the Group. A focus on inclusion was central to the success of the messaging and this helped to engage as many people as possible. Whilst nearly 50% of the population are likely to experience menopause during their working lives, as the toolkit highlights, '100% of people will be affected' – through their families, friends and colleagues.



This approach was integral to the success of the overall initiative, as it worked to engage and educate everyone. This was key to ensure a widespread values-led culture shift – and to break the existing wall of public silence that surrounded issues related to women's health and menopause.

The final toolkit that emerged was reviewed again by its Women's Global Network to ensure that it fully covered everyone's needs. This also ensured that there was cross-Group engagement informing and progressing the work, resulting in a credible, authentic and meaningful end result.

## Sharing the Toolkit

The toolkit was launched internally in February 2022 alongside other toolkits linked to the Company's other Group Inclusion Commitments.

Internal webinars were used to raise awareness of the Group Inclusion Commitments and specific menopause awareness webinars gave colleagues a forum to learn more, find out about the toolkit and ask questions. There was a strong positive reaction, including enthusiastic engagement from many male colleagues, some of whom said that they now understood how to better support their own families through the menopause journey.



"These were such a powerful insight... it has really helped my understanding and ability to talk openly about the subject."

"I will raise my own team's awareness of the various factors involved, so they feel more empowered to face menopause."



"I personally got so much learning from the case studies, stories and discussions. Although I am not an expert I feel with the knowledge gained, I have a much greater understanding and can hopefully help and support more effectively."



## Sharing the Toolkit Continued

Internal menopause awareness webinars were included in the Group's online learning and development festival (a season of 'Development Every Day' webinars in 2022). In 2023, webinars were aimed specifically at managers who are key to empowering open discussions about menstrual health and who need to treat these confidentially, professionally, and compassionately, whilst working with team members to identify adjustments to the working environment or working patterns that could help.

The February 2023 sessions, led by Lauren Chiren, had 155 attendees in total and prompted a further 18 colleagues to also join the Women's Global Network.



Kirstan Boynton  
Assistant Company Secretary  
Group Legal, Spirax Group



Friederike Wagschal,  
GESTRA Division Pricing Manager  
Spirax Group

**Spirax Group has seen an increase in engagement since these sessions in 2023. For example, in March 2024, to mark International Women's Day, Spirax Group hosted a 'Celebration Week' of events, designed and delivered by Women's Global Network Members themselves. One of the events centred around period health more generally, including highlighting the condition 'endometriosis', estimated by the World Health Organisation to impact 1 in 10 of those that menstruate.**

This demonstrates how bringing menopause into the workplace at Spirax Group has prompted even wider discussions on period health. Impressively, over 700 colleagues attended these sessions, amounting to almost a 6th of the workforce attending what were, in essence voluntary events, run by colleagues. This truly evidences how engagement, support and allyship for all women at Spirax Group is growing from strength-to-strength.

**In June 2023, Spirax Group embedded their menopause work in to the theme of International Women in Engineering Day, spearheaded by the Women's Engineering Society and it's the theme of #MakeSafetySeen. This was another chance to share the toolkit with colleagues. This event reached a total of 250 colleagues across all levels of the organisation.**

Additionally, colleagues in the UK joined a Circle2Success event in Cheltenham to share their menopause stories and how the Group had committed to support colleagues on the topic.



Helen Rainsley,  
Business Administrator  
Spirax Group

## Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

Small, practical differences can make a huge difference for people who are navigating their menopause journey. Things that might be helpful for people experiencing perimenopause and menopause include:

- ✓ **Changes to working hours**
- ✓ **Working from home and not insisting on video always being turned on during team calls**
- ✓ **Reducing travel**
- ✓ **Increased rest breaks**
- ✓ **Paid time off for medical appointments**
- ✓ **Making spare uniforms available and ensuring they are made from natural materials**
- ✓ **Allowing time off work if needed**
- ✓ **Providing cool and/or private spaces for those experiencing menopause to rest, to talk with HR or colleagues**

## Positive Action Spreads

Inspired by the work happening around menopause and period health, one Spirax Group graduate led their own initiative to introduce free period products in bathrooms across the Company's UK sites. This was supported by management and, as a result, all of the Company's UK sites now have free period products available. Globally, other sites are encouraged to follow this lead and provide free period products at work as best practice.

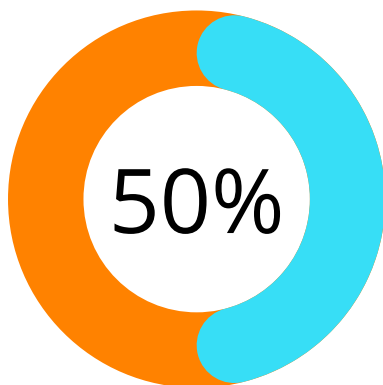
# The Impact

The toolkit and trainings have enabled many women with lived experience of the menopause to gain the confidence to share their stories and seek support. Some have then become public advocates for menstrual support in the workplace too.

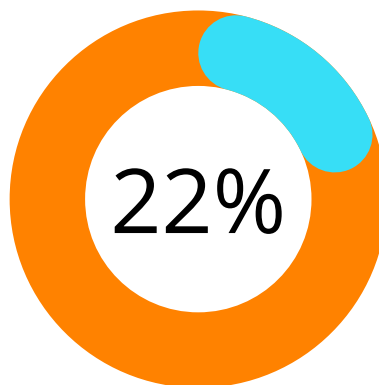


"I found the menopause training extremely useful, not only from my own menopausal perspective, but also as a Menopause Ambassador for our area of the business. Following the training I have added more information to our internal menopause support intranet page so many others have and will continue to benefit. I'd also like to share my perspective on menopausal hot flushes in the spirit of positive reframing ... I now refer to them as "power surges."

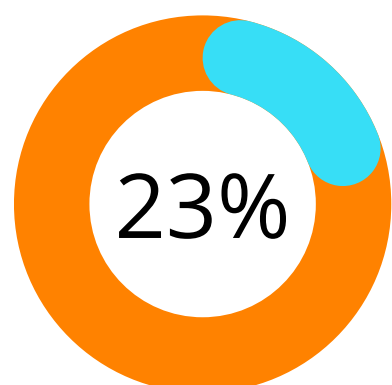
- Tess Arnold, Senior HR Advisor  
Watson-Marlow Fluid Technology Solutions



of women feeling most unprepared at the onset of menopause



feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable discussing it with their friends



feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable discussing menopause with their partner

A recent global study, carried out by Avon, revealed that **women around the world are unprepared and uninformed when it comes to their menopause** – with the onset phase of menopause leaving nearly half of women feeling most unprepared.

This lack of information or foresight is related to how difficult it still is to talk openly about the effects of the menopause, due to stigma and embarrassment. **Research found that 23% feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable discussing menopause with their partner, whilst 22% feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable discussing it with their friends.**

***Spirax Group has been working to change this situation by normalising the conversation among women of all ages – and colleagues of all genders.***

## The Impact Continued

The training session on menopause was so informative and helpful. As a woman not yet experiencing menopause, I learnt so much that I had no idea about and although a daunting thing to have to go through, the session made me feel like the support will be there when needed.

- Clare Price,  
Executive Assistant

Figures from Spirax Group's intranet show that the online toolkit is being regularly accessed. **By the end of 2023, tracking data showed that there had been 353 views of the toolkit.**

The company's menopause and menstrual health commitment is the start of a journey to challenge stigma and silence while signposting support across the Group. It's an initiative in which everyone is included, as everyone in the company has the potential to experience menopause, to be impacted by it, or to make a positive difference at work, home or in the community.

I think the greatest support is that this is recognised to affect a lot of women and that there is some understanding of it. I'm fortunate to have a female manager, about the same age, so that helps. I think all the things that are being discussed at Group level - wellbeing, menopause and more - are of huge benefit to us as employees.

- Charlotte Lie  
Financial Controller, SXS





# Top 3 Tips

**1**

Start by breaking through the silence of stigma and anxiety around how to broach menstrual health in the workplace today – don't try to wait until you have all the answers

**2**

Storytelling has been integral to the progress made by Spirax Group. It really helped to catalyse non-women allyship and involve colleagues that will not experience menopause on the journey. Make the topic meaningful to everyone.

**3**

To create widespread, lasting change in workplace culture, focus on inclusivity. The toolkit was explicitly included as a Group Inclusion Commitment and part of the global Inclusion Plan from the beginning.

The toolkit and subsequent webinars aimed to engage and educate everyone – not just women. As it says in the toolkit: '100% of people will be affected by this – directly themselves, or through colleagues, family, or friends... So, we can all help make a positive difference.'

**CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SPIRAX GROUP  
MENSTRUAL AND MENOPAUSE HEALTH TOOLKIT**



For further information on anything covered here,  
please contact:

**Katherine Watson**

Head of Products and Services Delivery – Projects  
k.watson@wisecampaign.org.uk  
07885 864 839



**Jack Painter**

Head of Products and Services Delivery – D&I Lead  
j.painter@wisecampaign.org.uk  
07762 275 316



**Please follow, share and tag**



IET London: Savoy Place  
2 Savoy Place London WC2R 0BL

info@wisecampaign.org.uk | wisecampaign.org.uk

WISE is a Community Interest Company. Registered company name: WISE Campaign CIC. Company No.  
07533934 VAT No. 136 5513 20