

## Experts want to see greater focus on women's life phases

**Mental Health Issues Affect Women More Than Men** Mental health issues affect women to a greater extent than men, and we also know that significantly more women are put on sick leave. Now, experts in women's health within occupational healthcare are calling for changes to better capture and address women's well-being in working life.

"Research shows that biological factors influence women's health. For example, estrogen can increase the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that, among other things, has an antidepressant effect. Estrogen can also make the brain and nervous system more sensitive to existing serotonin. When estrogen levels drop after pregnancy or during menopause, this can lead to an increased risk of depression," explains Emma Bro, a company physician specializing in women's health at Avonova.

"Another key aspect is how stress hormones, particularly cortisol, affect the levels of both serotonin and estrogen in the body. Research suggests that the availability of both serotonin and estrogen decreases during prolonged stress."

Now, experts at Avonova want a greater focus on so-called life phases, meaning a more distinct employer focus on women's unique needs during different stages of life. One step in that direction is to further develop health examinations.

### Health examinations adapted for women

"More employers need to modernize their health examinations. Many have been running in the same old routine with generic questions asked of the entire workforce. Unfortunately, it is rare that women are offered specific health examinations complete with tailored advice and tools to manage stress and hormonal changes," says Maria Sjöberg, a company nurse specializing in women's health at Avonova.

### The welfare sector must be prioritized

In addition to modernized examinations, there must be a clear plan for how employers address these issues. It involves working preventively regarding women-related health topics, catching early signals, and even tailoring long-term rehabilitation plans for those in need especially within the so-called female-dominated professions.

"Unfortunately, women's well-being is generally poorer in the welfare sector. Stress and a poor work environment are not a good combination with women's hormonal challenges, particularly during and around menopause," explains Emma Bro.

### The Småland Project shows the way

For the past year, Avonova has been running a project at its health center in Småland focused on improving women's health at work.

“This includes, among other things, adjustments to working hours, continuous opportunities for recovery during the workday, and more recognition at work. We hope to expand the initiative and get more employers across Sweden to invest in women’s health,” concludes Emma Bro.

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**About Avonova**

Avonova is Nordic’s leading provider of occupational health services and is the only Nordic occupational health services provider with a fully integrated hybrid digital/physical delivery model.

Avonova offers a comprehensive range of services to promote well-being and reduce absences, among employees of companies and institutions of all sizes and in all industries. It is leading in preventive evidence based occupational health services in highest impact areas, such as presenteeism, vaccination, and drug testing and rehab.

Avonova has its main offices in Larvik, Norway and Stockholm, Sweden and delivers its services digitally and from 166 locations in Norway and Sweden, by about 1 100 employees – mainly physicians, psychiatrists, nurses, and workplace engineers. For more information, visit [www.avonova.se/no/fi](http://www.avonova.se/no/fi).