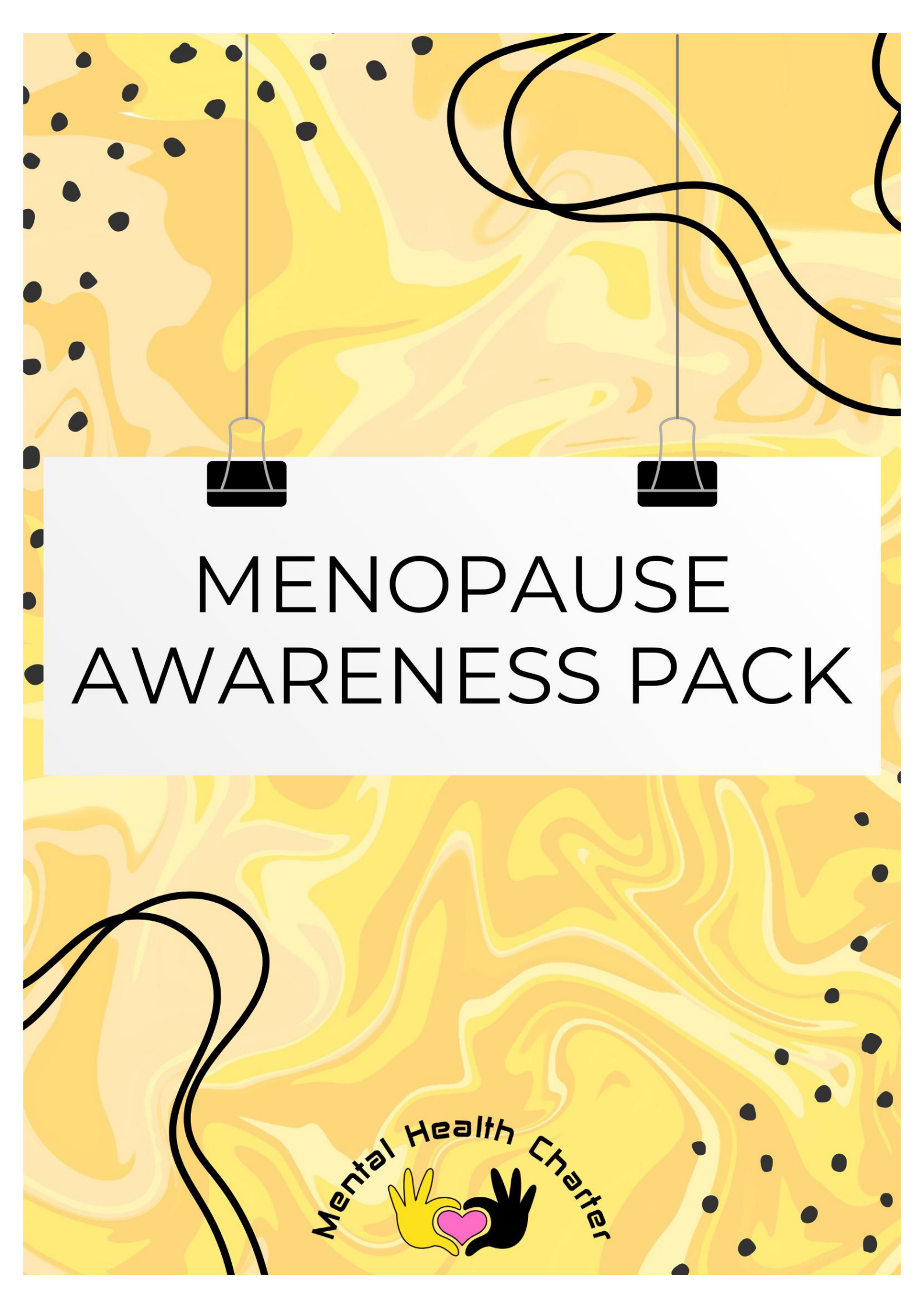




MENOPAUSE AWARENESS PACK

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

Menopause is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. This usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. It can sometimes happen earlier naturally. Or for reasons such as surgery to remove the ovaries (oophorectomy) or the uterus (hysterectomy), cancer treatments like chemotherapy, or a genetic reason. Sometimes the reason is unknown.



Perimenopause is when you have symptoms before your periods have stopped. You reach menopause when you have not had a period for 12 months. Menopause and perimenopause can cause symptoms like anxiety, mood swings, brain fog, hot flushes and irregular periods. These symptoms can start years before your periods stop and carry on afterwards.

Menopause and perimenopause symptoms can have a big impact on your life, including relationships and work. There are things you can do to help with symptoms. There are also medicines that can replace the missing hormones and help relieve your symptoms.

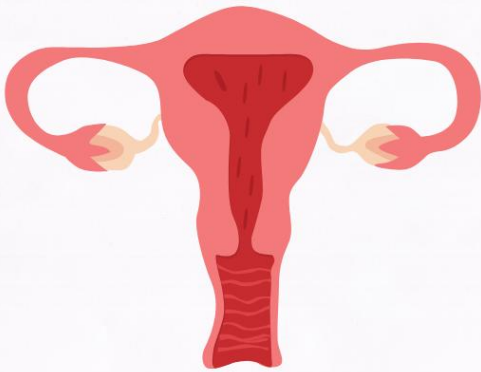
SYMPTOMS

Common symptoms of menopause and perimenopause

Menopause and perimenopause symptoms can have a big impact on your daily life, including relationships, social life, family life and work. It can feel different for everyone. You may have a number of symptoms or none. Symptoms usually start months or years before your periods stop.

This is called the perimenopause.

CHANGES TO YOUR PERIODS



The first sign of the perimenopause is usually, but not always, a change in the normal pattern of your periods, for example they become irregular. Eventually you'll stop having periods altogether.

Mental health symptoms

Common mental health symptoms of menopause and perimenopause include:

- changes to your mood, like low mood, anxiety, mood swings and low self-esteem
- problems with memory or concentration (brain fog)

Common physical symptoms of menopause and perimenopause include:

- hot flushes, when you have sudden feelings of hot or cold in your face, neck and chest which can make you dizzy
- difficulty sleeping, which may be a result of night sweats and make you feel tired and irritable during the day
- palpitations, when your heartbeats suddenly become more noticeable
- headaches and migraines that are worse than usual
- muscle aches and joint pains
- changed body shape and weight gain
- skin changes including dry and itchy skin
- vaginal dryness and pain, itching or discomfort during sex

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

See a GP or nurse if:
you think you have perimenopause or menopause symptoms

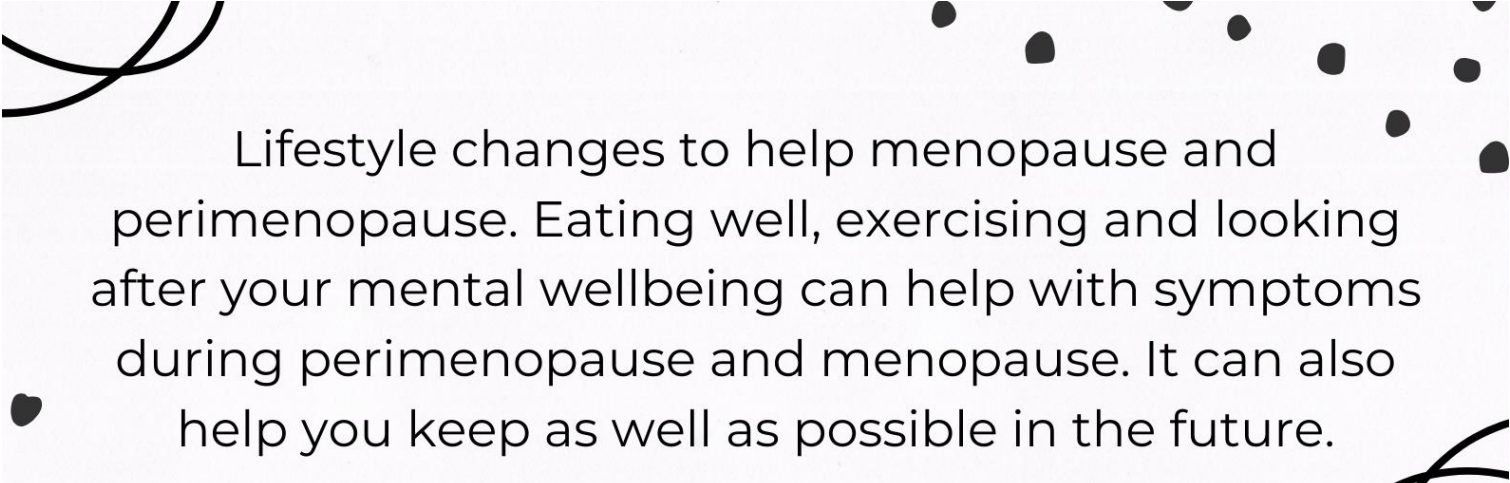
You can also speak to a pharmacist for advice about treatments and things you can do.

How long symptoms last

Symptoms can last for months or years, and can change with time.

For example, hot flushes and night sweats may improve, and then you may develop low mood and anxiety.

Some symptoms, such as joint pain and vaginal dryness, can carry on after your periods stop.



Lifestyle changes to help menopause and perimenopause. Eating well, exercising and looking after your mental wellbeing can help with symptoms during perimenopause and menopause. It can also help you keep as well as possible in the future.

Do -

- get plenty of rest, including keeping to regular sleep routines
- eat a healthy diet
- have calcium-rich food like milk, yoghurt and kale to keep bones healthy
- exercise regularly, try including weight-bearing activities where your feet and legs support your weight like walking, running or dancing
- do relaxing things like yoga, tai chi or meditation
- talk to other people going through the same thing, like family, friends or colleagues
- talk to a doctor before taking herbal supplements or complementary medicines

Don't -

- do not smoke
- do not drink more than the recommended alcohol limit

BRAIN FOG

What is brain fog?



Menopause brain fog is a group of symptoms that happens around the time of the menopause, including difficulty remembering words and numbers, disruptions in daily life (misplacing items like keys), trouble concentrating (absent mindedness, losing a train of thought, being more easily distracted), difficulty switching between tasks, forgetting the reason for doing something (like why you came into a room), and forgetting appointments and events

Research studies find that women's memory does in fact change at menopause, so these complaints are real – it's not in your imagination. Brain fog is normal and common at midlife. These bothersome problems can affect your quality of life. However, they are usually quite mild and will improve post menopause.

WHAT CAUSES BRAIN FOG?

These memory complaints may be caused by rising and falling hormones levels, especially estrogen, and by some menopause symptoms, like the hot flashes, sleep disturbances and mood changes. If you have moderate to severe hot flashes, especially at night, you may find your memory is affected

WILL BRAIN FOG AND PROBLEMS LEAD TO DEMENTIA IN LATER LIFE?

Women are often concerned that these memory issues are an early symptom of Alzheimer's disease or dementia. However, these issues are very common in midlife women and typically improve with time. All women go through menopause, but most women will not develop dementia. Dementia at midlife is very rare unless you have a family history of early-onset Alzheimer's disease.



TWELVE WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

A healthy heart goes hand in hand with a healthy brain.

- Get regular check-ups - obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes are harmful for brain health.
- Watch your weight with a healthy BMI 18-25 and set a goal to your lower blood pressure to 120 mm Hg18.
- Cut down on starchy, fatty, sugary foods, and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. A nutritious Mediterranean style diet is easy to follow.
- Engage in regular physical activity - increased cardiovascular fitness decreases risk of dementia.
- Break a sweat with a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity weekly.
- A healthy life style includes getting enough sleep, and minimizing stress.
- Stop smoking and drink in moderation.
- Protect your head from injury and try to avoid second-hand tobacco smoke and air pollution.
- Challenge and exercise your brain by learning new skills, reading and volunteering.
- Stay connected – social engagement can boost your brain health.
- Find ways to be part of your local community and share quality time with family and friends.