



# Introduction

The Self-Care Forum's self-care aware fact sheets aim to help clinicians and service-users discuss issues around self-care within the practice, pharmacy or health trust setting and especially how to handle the symptoms in the future. They provide patients and service-users with evidence based easy-to-read information.

As evidence-based resources produced by health professionals, clinicians are confident in trusting, sharing and recommending this information to service-users.

It is important that we ensure our health resources are accessible and meet recommended levels of health literacy – after all, health literacy is key to our mission to help people take care of themselves.

We follow guidance from the NHS on “[standards for creating health content](#).” We also follow guidance from the Health Education England’s “[Health Literacy how to guide](#)”.

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# Development process

The image displays five overlapping fact sheets from the Self-Care Forum. The sheets are:

- The Menopause** (Fact Sheet No. 22): Discusses understanding and managing perimenopause and menopause, and lists common signs and symptoms.
- The POWER of Self Care** (Fact Sheet No. 23): A motivational sheet titled 'You've got the POWER to take control of your life'. It features a central 'POWER' acronym: Personal Wellbeing, Out and about & Exercise, Weight Assessment, Taking it Easy, and Rest & Recovery. It includes sections for Personal Wellbeing, Mental health and well-being, Spirituality, Managing Illness, and Out and about and Exercise.
- Winter Wellness GET READY** (Fact Sheet No. 25): Focuses on protecting oneself from winter weather, including sections on 'Remember to Plan' and 'Energy and Warmth'.
- Winter Illness GET READY** (Fact Sheet No. 26): Provides information on managing winter ailments like colds, coughs, and sore throats. It includes sections for 'Cold', 'Sore Throat', and 'Cough'.
- Strep A & Scarlet Fever** (Fact Sheet No. 27): Explains what Strep A infection and Scarlet Fever are, their symptoms, and how to seek help.

# 1 Format

Fact sheets should be on 2 sides of A4 with around 1,000 – 1,300 words. This is considered a digestible amount of information.

Fact sheets should be relevant for all 4 countries of the UK and should contain the following information:

- Useful facts
- What people can expect to happen (the natural history)
- Treatment
- What people can do to help themselves – now and in the future
- When to seek medical help (the ‘red flags’)
- Where to find out more

## COVID-19

For fact sheets linked to colds and flu a link to the NHS website page can be included in the section "where to find out more".

## Readability tools

When developing a new fact sheet it is important to ensure the information is accessible to most of the population which has an average reading age of 9 – 11 years.

To pitch the information correctly use the [NHS Readability tool](#) and [Flesch Kincaid](#) aiming to reach a grade below 5.

## 2 Collaborative working

When developing a new fact sheet, the lead author is invited to work on it collaboratively with partners such as:

- health professionals from the Self-Care Forum Board,
- health and public health experts and advisors,
- [Self-Care Champions](#) \*
- lay people.

\*a mixture of people in health and public health, including health professionals, social prescribers, patient representatives and academics

## 3 Evidence Sources

It is essential information in the fact sheets is the most up-to-date and is evidence-based using guidance sourced from reputable resources and reference groups, such as:

- Clinical Knowledge Summaries from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- Guidelines from the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN)
- Publications produced by UK Royal Colleges and major charities
- Selected major peer reviewed scientific articles
- NHS Websites (including those in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales)
- Patient UK
- Moorfields Eye Hospital Website
- NHS National Menopause Clinical Reference Group

All sources and links used to produce or update fact sheets must be noted, and these details will be included in the online version of the fact sheet.

**The fact sheets should provide a general clinical overview rather than an in-depth synopsis of the topic.**

## 4 AI Use

AI such as ChatGPT must only be used as an assistant and not as a source for analysis or research, which means it can be used to help with drafting text.

For example:

- To turn a topic into a search term and a clear question;
- To summarise text from legitimate and evidence-based sources;
- To help improve plain English, structure and readability of information.

The use of AI must not be used for evidence sourcing unless links are checked and verified. As set out in the “Evidence Sources” page, all evidence sources and links must be noted and included in the online version of the fact sheet.

## 5 Version control and archiving

Drafts should be done online via Microsoft OneDrive to limit repetition and make sharing simpler in a shared space.

When drafting, the document's name should have the following format:

**YearMonthDay Ailment Name Vx.x (the 1st draft should be V0.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> V0.2 etc).**

### Naming finalised versions

**Final version = Ailment Number Ailment Name V1.0 YM**

Once finalised, if any further edits are done before the review date, this should be recognised by re-naming the version, ie **V1.1** etc.

When reviewing the fact sheet after 2 years, it should be renamed with **V2.0** etc.

### Original Fact Sheets Folders

Once finalised, drafts, feedback, comments and the sign off sheet should be kept in a file with the topic name and year. These files should be saved in the folder "original fact sheets".

All up-to-date final pdf versions should be kept in a folder with the year which is in a file named "fact sheets". Each time the fact sheets are reviewed a new folder should be made with the year of the review.

## 6 Peer Reviewed and User Assessment

Fact sheets are to be peer reviewed and assessed using the questions laid out in p10 and in 2 stages as follows:

### **First Stage**

Reviewing of the fact sheet will include a minimum of 3 Self-Care Forum Board members (preferably a nurse, pharmacist and GP) with further board members, and advisors also invited to help develop and peer review the fact sheet if necessary. User input may also be sought at draft stage.

### **Second stage**

At least 4 Self-Care Forum Self-Care Champions should be invited to take part in a rigorous second stage reviewing of the fact sheet, checking them for readability, accessibility and understanding.

NB: Communications with Champions should be logged by Libby Whittaker.

Feedback received from reviewers should be kept in the appropriate ailment/year folder.

# 7 User testing questions

When reviewing the fact sheets, reviewers should be invited to consider the following:

## **Accessibility**

- Are the letters large enough to read comfortably?
- Are the headings clear and easy to understand?
- Does the layout make it easy to locate information?
- Is the contrast between the background and text sharp enough to ensure readability?

## **Readability/Literacy**

- Does the information make sense to you on the first read?
- Do you need to read the information multiple times to understand its meaning?
- Are there any words or terms you do not understand?
- If there are unfamiliar words, are they explained within the text?

## **Numeracy**

- If numbers are included, is their meaning clear and easy to understand?
- Are numerical data presented in a way that is straightforward and comprehensible?

## **Images**

- Are the images clear and easily recognisable?
- Is the meaning of each image obvious and directly relevant to the topic?
- Do the images effectively support and enhance the understanding of the text?

## **Hyperlinks**

- Do all hyperlinks work correctly?
- Are the linked pages relevant and useful in relation to the topic discussed?
- Do the hyperlinks provide additional valuable information without causing confusion?

## **Digital Literacy (For web-page or online reviewers)**

- Is the web page layout clear and user-friendly?
- Are the headings distinct and helpful for navigation?
- Is the text easy to see and read on your device?
- Are the images relevant to the text and helpful in understanding the topic?
- Can you easily access and use the hyperlinks?
- Do the hyperlinks direct you to appropriate and relevant content?

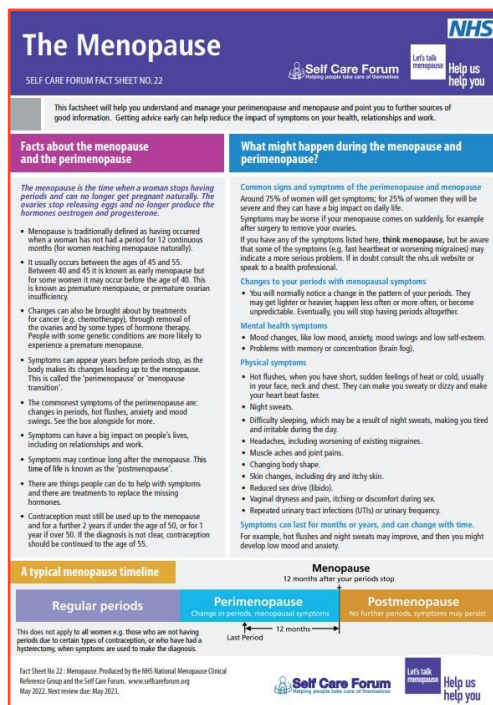
# 8 Design

Once finalised, and checked for grammar and spelling mistakes, the draft should be carefully pasted into the latest fact sheet design template using Affinity Designer software.

The font should be Frutiger with 12pt for the main writing and 16pt for the headings.

On both pages, at the bottom right-hand side the following information must be included taking up 3 lines:

Fact Sheet No x Ver 1.0: Ailment Name  
Produced by the Self-Care Forum ([www.selfcareforum.org](http://www.selfcareforum.org))  
Reviewed Month Year. Next review due Month Year.



**The Menopause**  
SELF CARE FORUM FACT SHEET NO.22

**Facts about the menopause and the perimenopause**

The menopause is the time when a woman stops having periods and can no longer get pregnant naturally. The ovaries stop releasing eggs and no longer produce the hormones oestrogen and progesterone.

- Menopause is traditionally defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for 12 continuous months (for women reaching menopause naturally).
- It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. Between 40 and 45 it is known as early menopause but for some women it may occur before the age of 40. This is known as premature menopause, or premature ovarian insufficiency.
- Changes can also be brought about by treatments for cancer (e.g. chemotherapy), through removal of the ovaries and by some types of hormone therapy. People with some genetic conditions are more likely to experience a premature menopause.
- Symptoms can appear years before periods stop, as the body makes its changes leading up to the menopause. This is called the 'perimenopause' or 'menopause transition'.
- The commonest symptoms of the perimenopause are: changes in periods, hot flashes, anxiety and mood swings. See the box alongside for more.
- Symptoms can have a big impact on people's lives, including on relationships and work.
- Symptoms may continue long after the menopause. This time of life is known as the 'postmenopause'.
- There are things people can do to help with symptoms and there are treatments to replace the missing hormones.
- Contraception must still be used up to the menopause and for a further 2 years if under the age of 50, or for 1 year if over 50. If the diagnosis is not clear, contraception should be continued to the age of 55.

**What might happen during the menopause and perimenopause?**

Common signs and symptoms of the perimenopause and menopause

Around 75% of women will get symptoms, for 25% of women they will be severe and they can have a big impact on daily life. Symptoms may be worse if your menopause comes on suddenly, for example after surgery to remove your ovaries.

If you have any of the symptoms listed here, think menopause, but be aware that some of the symptoms (e.g. fast heartbeat or worsening migraines) may indicate a more serious problem. If in doubt consult the nhs.uk website or speak to a health professional.

**Changes to your periods with menopausal symptoms**

- You will normally notice a change in the pattern of your periods. They may get lighter or heavier, happen less often or more often, or become unpredictable. Eventually you will stop having periods altogether.

**Mental health symptoms**

- Mood changes, like low mood, anxiety, mood swings and low self-esteem.
- Problems with memory or concentration (brain fog).

**Physical symptoms**

- Hot flashes, when you have short, sudden feelings of heat or cold, usually in your face, neck and chest. They can make you sweaty or dizzy and make your heart beat faster.
- Night sweats.
- Difficulty sleeping, which may be a result of night sweats, making you tired and irritable during the day.
- Headaches, including worsening of existing migraines.
- Muscle aches and joint pains.
- Changing body shape.
- Skin changes, including dry and itchy skin.
- Reduced sex drive (libido).
- Vaginal dryness and pain, itching or discomfort during sex.
- Repeated urinary tract infections (UTIs) or urinary frequency.

Symptoms can last for months or years, and can change with time. For example, hot flashes and night sweats may improve, and then you might develop low mood and anxiety.

**A typical menopause timeline**

Menopause: 12 months after your periods stop

Regular periods → Perimenopause (Change in periods, menopausal symptoms) → Postmenopause (No further periods, symptoms may persist)

This does not apply to all women e.g. those who are not having periods due to certain types of contraception, or who have had a hysterectomy, when symptoms are used to make the diagnosis.

Fact Sheet No. 22 - Menopause. Produced by the NHS National Menopause Clinical Reference Group and the Self-Care Forum. [www.selfcareforum.org](http://www.selfcareforum.org) May 2022. Next review due: May 2023.

Only the most recent design file fact sheet should exist and be kept with all designed files in a folder entitled "design files".

## 9 Sign Off and upload

The lead author is responsible for sign off of the resource once all developmental processes have been completed including the design element.

The document “Fact Sheet Sign Off Form” should be completed at each stage of the process.

### Website

After sign off, the fact sheet should be uploaded to the Self-Care Forum’s website page “[Fact Sheets](#).” Using the fact sheet template page on the website to ensure consistency, the fact sheet information will also be copied to a separate new page of the website and a download link added.

### References

References to publications, guidance or websites that were sourced during the production of the fact sheet should be included at the bottom of the page together with the date of the next review.

## 10 Proactive feedback

The remaining Self-Care Champions and subscribers (1500+) to the Self-Care Forum's e-newsletter should be invited to comment on new fact sheets once these are published. An invitation to comment should also be included on social media posts.

Comments should be logged in the "Fact Sheet Feedback Record" and shared if relevant. This feedback can be used with potential sponsors to support the funding process.

Feedback should be sought proactively if someone has contacted the Self-Care Forum and made it known they have used the fact sheets.

# 11 Evaluation and funding

Quarterly download numbers of fact sheets should be collected from Google Analytics both individually and overall to gauge impact and use. This should also be done after National Self-Care Week to understand the impact of the Week and the fact sheets.

## Funding

Fact sheets must be a source of income for The Self-Care Forum and can only be developed when funding has been secured from a sponsor.

## 12 Review

The Self-Care Forum has committed to checking and updating fact sheets every 2 years. If something comes to light in between that time the fact sheet will be reviewed earlier.

### **The purpose of the review:**

The review is to ensure information is still current and relevant and should be carried out by someone with clinical knowledge.

It isn't necessary for the fact sheet to be shared with expert reviewers unlike when developing new fact sheets. Although a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion can be sought from other clinical board members, Self-Care Champions or known expert contacts.

Bear in mind the fact sheets are meant to be brief, providing a general clinical overview, not an in-depth synopsis of the condition.

Any advice we recommend must be clearly evidence-based and supported by NHS and other trusted sources such as those cited in chapter 3.

### **What to check**

See review process on page 16 for details.

## 13 Review Process

- A word draft of the fact sheet will be shared via Microsoft OneDrive for review. Edits should be easily identifiable.
- Check the relevant NICE <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance> and, or SIGN <https://www.sign.ac.uk/> guidance and when the last review was (NB NICE has a 3 yearly rolling review process) and ensure fact sheet advice aligns with the latest review).
- Check all the links are working, and whether separate links are needed for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. (Fact sheets must be relevant for all 4 UK countries).
- Consider if there is anything new or coming up we need to be aware of.

Check NHS and NICE CKS (clinical knowledge summaries) websites and usual search engines where possible for any new evidence. The NICE knowledge hub gives access to Open Athens, Cochrane and BMJ evidence see link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/about/what-we-do/evidence-services/journals-and-databases>.

- Where new guidance on a particular area is coming out in the next 6 - 12 months, it might be worthwhile postponing the review until this is published.
- Also check for readability and provide additional sense-check advice if aware of anything important.

**If you have concerns about advice or recommendations, please seek a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion. You may do this directly or by notifying the Self-Care Forum manager.**

**Once the review is completed, please notify the manager and share details of reference material.**

## 14 Review Process: editing

Once it has been reviewed, the next stage is to make the necessary edits to the fact sheet as follows:

1. The edits will be made to the Fact Sheet and the Fact Sheet page of the website.
2. Ensure the links are still relevant and working and reflect information in the 4 UK countries.
3. New review date and fact sheet version will be added to the Fact Sheet footer and to the website page.
4. The updated version of the fact sheets will be added to a new fact sheet folder with the new date.

## 15 Removal of a Fact Sheet

It may be advisable to remove a fact sheet if it is no longer useful or relevant.

If you believe this is the case, raise the issue with the Self-Care Forum manager in the first instance along with reasons for it to be removed. The following elements should be considered before it is removed:

1. Why is the fact sheet no longer relevant?
2. Have download numbers been low for at least 6 months?
3. Is the information no longer of value to service-users?

A log with the above information and responses should be drafted and dated.

### Next steps

Once satisfied that the fact sheet is no longer required, it should be removed from the website. Versions should be archived in a folder with the ailment name and year it was removed.

The log should also be placed in the folder as a record of why the fact sheet was removed.

# 16 Fact Sheet Feedback Process

It is important to consider all feedback about the fact sheets, which is welcomed.

## All feedback

In the first instance all feedback should be assessed by the Self-Care Forum Manager who can decide on the next steps depending on the nature of the feedback, it may not be necessary to escalate it more widely.

## Edits, errors and updates

If once assessed by the Self-Care Forum Manager and edits, errors or updates are required that need a decision, feedback should be shared with the lead author or editor of the fact sheet.

Individual trustees or advisors can be consulted depending on the expertise required.

## Complaints

Complaints should be brought to the attention of Self-Care Forum Trustees Dr Melanie Davis-Hall and Dr John Chisholm for consideration.

The wider board or Self-Care Forum advisers can be brought in for further discussion if their expertise is required.

Feedback and complaints should be logged in the "Fact Sheet Feedback Record" with date received, feedback details, categorisation (urgent/important), the outcome of discussions, final action taken and date of the action. The person who gave feedback should also be contacted with details of the action taken.

# 17 Dissemination

It is important to ensure fact sheets are shared as widely as possible.

## New fact sheets

When launching a new fact sheet:

- Send to Self-Care Forum Board with a request to share widely
- Send to Self-Care Forum contacts with a request to share widely
- Send to Self-Care Champions with a request to share widely
- Add post to the Self-Care Forum website
- Add article to the Self-Care Forum newsletter
- Send social media posts on all 4 platforms
- Consider drafting an article for a relevant journal

## Ongoing promotion

Further opportunities to promote the fact sheets:

- When talking to new contacts
- During relevant health awareness events such as "World Continence Week" and "National Eczema Week" and "Backcare Awareness Week".
- Spotlight a fact sheet in monthly newsletters
- Consider articles for relevant journals showcasing the fact sheets

## National Self-Care Week

Use the Week to promote and share the fact sheets by:

- Including them in social media assets meant for organisations participating in the Week
- Share a post each day focusing on a different fact sheet
- Self-Care Forum Board trustees to share or send their own posts on social media
- Send note to Self-Care Champions encouraging them to share posts focusing on fact sheets

Processes and procedures for development of our fact sheets will be reviewed every 2 years. The next review is due in January 2028.

