

Menopause and HIV: an opportunity to maximise health and wellbeing

Dr Shema Tariq

Principal Clinical Research Fellow
UCL Institute for Global Health

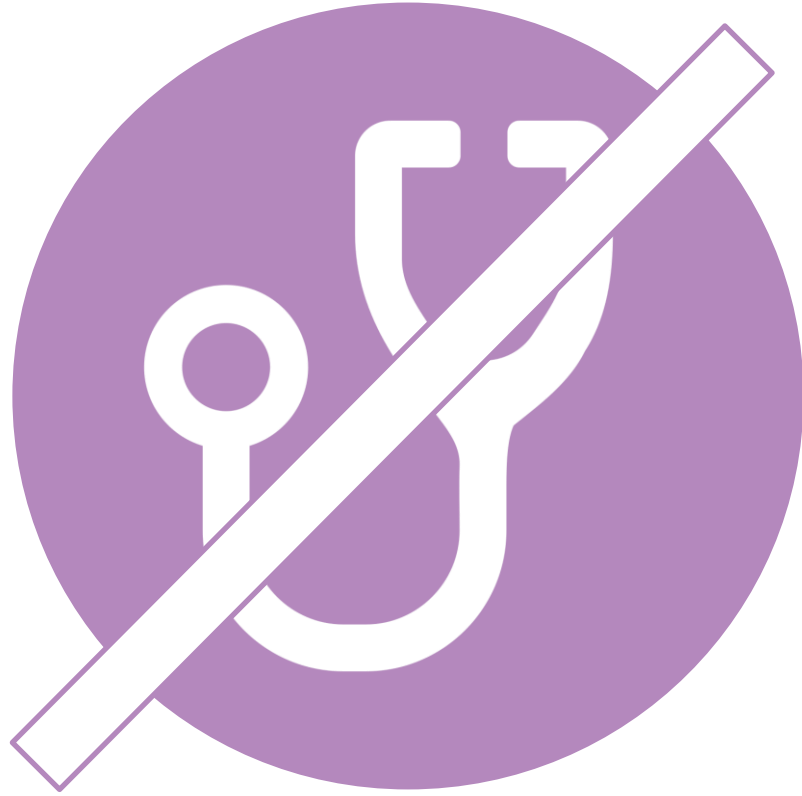


20 November 2025

About me

- HIV and sexual health consultant for 20+ years
- Established and lead a specialist HIV and menopause clinic
- Author of national and international guidelines
- Menopause research for 10+ years
- Co-lead InTune: the UK's first national menopause education and support programme
- I'm also a perimenopausal woman

18 October 2024

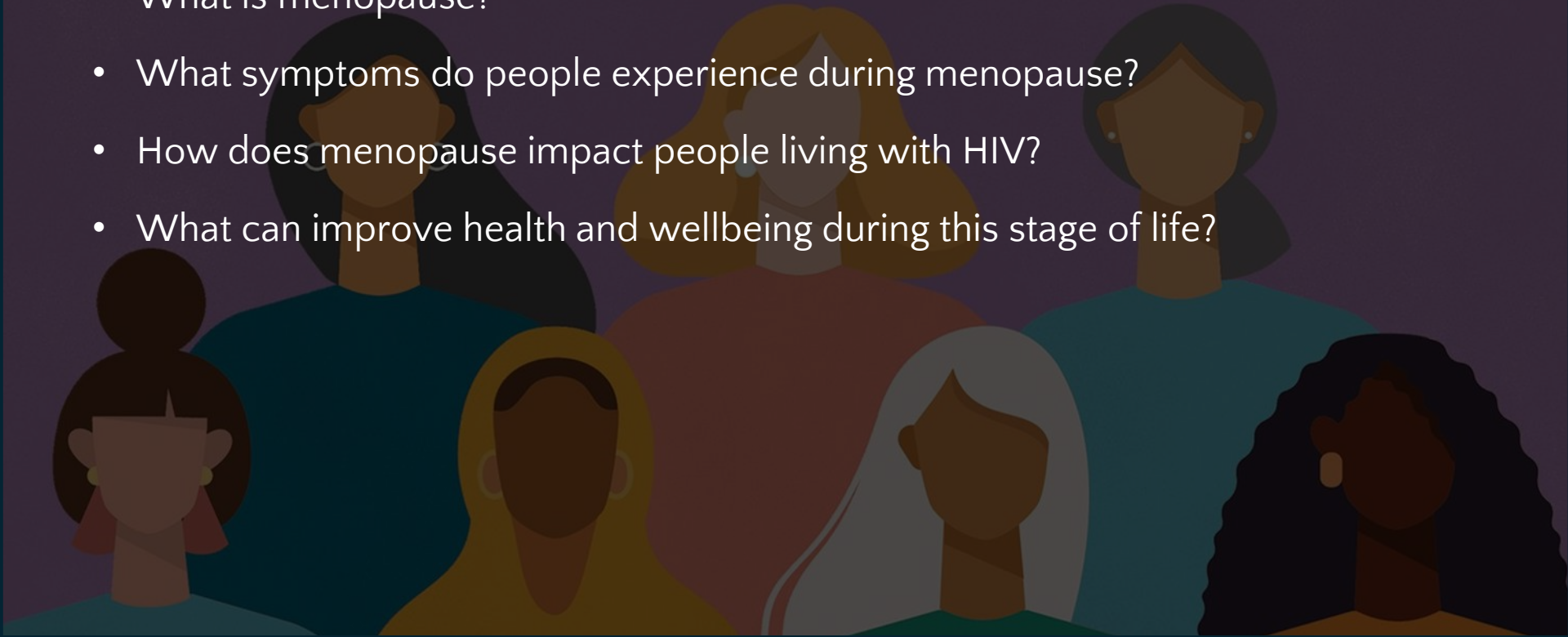




Menopause happens to cisgender women, trans and gender non-conforming people and intersex people

We will cover

- What is menopause?
- What symptoms do people experience during menopause?
- How does menopause impact people living with HIV?
- What can improve health and wellbeing during this stage of life?





WHAT IS THE

MENOPAUSE?



The time when periods stop and people can no longer get pregnant

DIFFICULT TIMES

Menopause in numbers



The average age that women reach the menopause in the UK

1 in 4

women will experience hot
flushes during the menopause
that adversely affect their work



4-8 years

The typical length of time that
menopause symptoms last



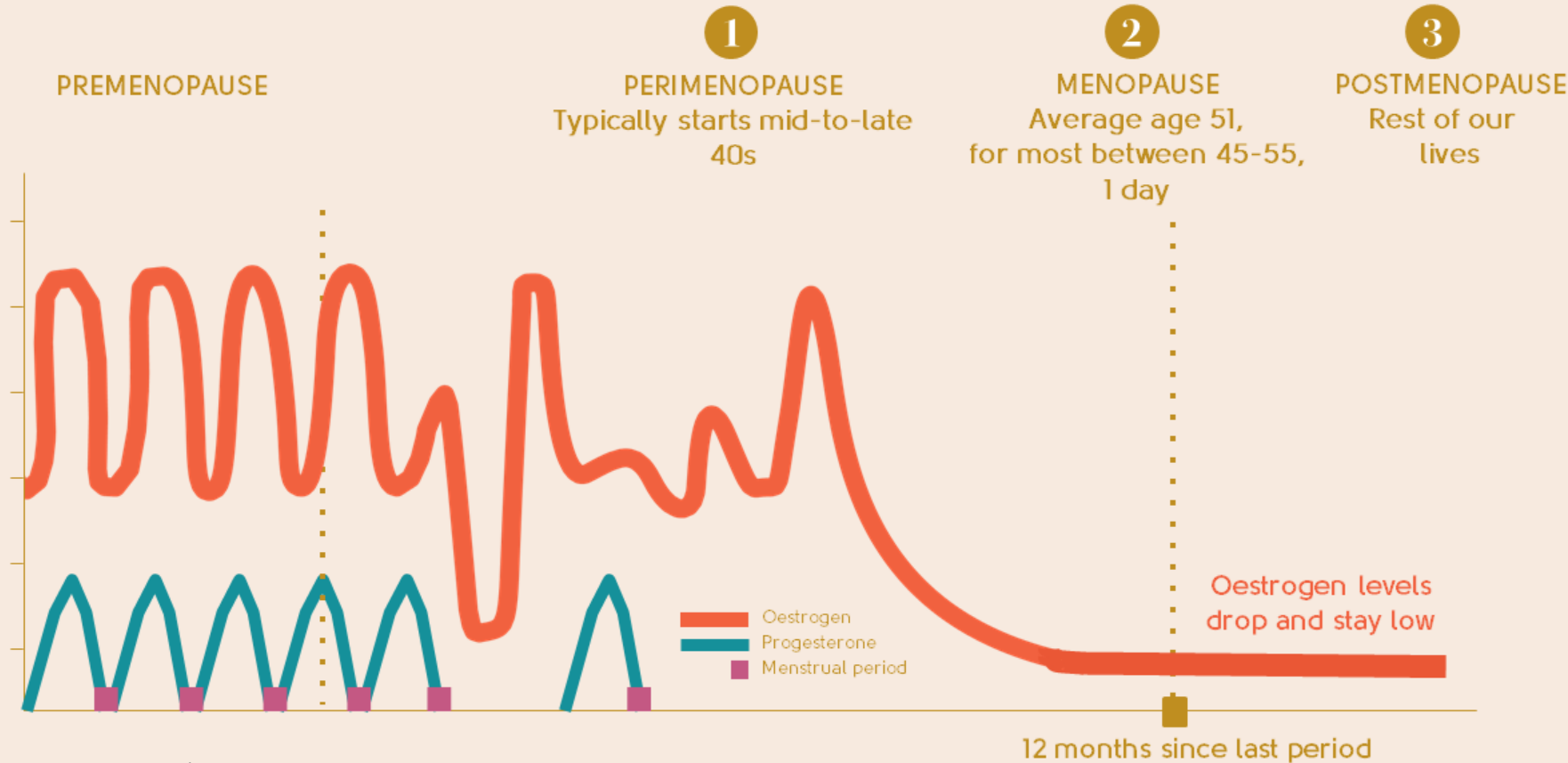
75-80%

of women of menopausal
age are in work

Only five other species of animal experience menopause

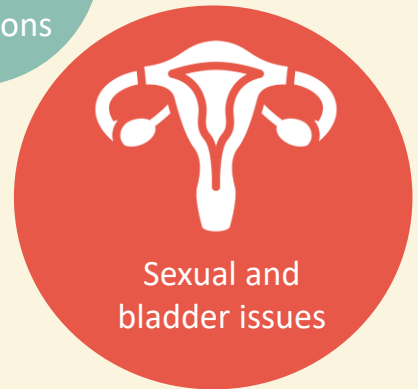
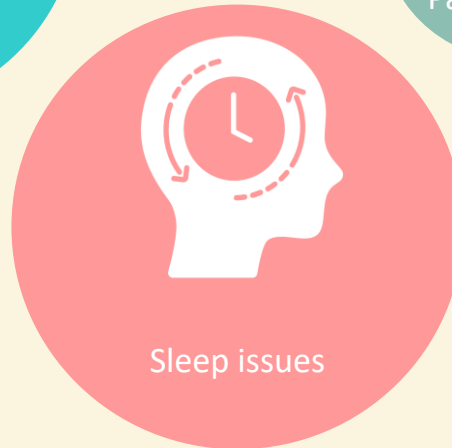
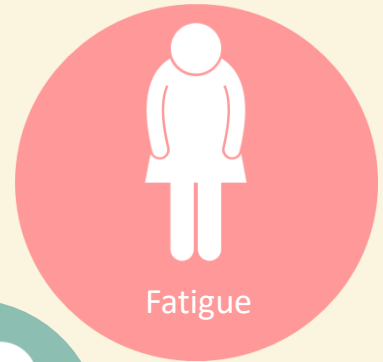
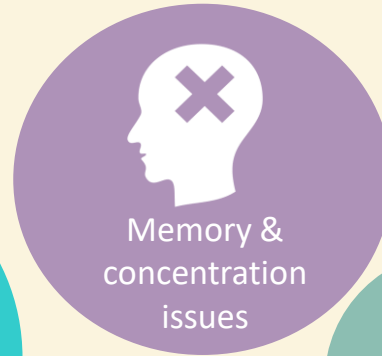


Menopause transition





It's not just hot flashes (although they are important)



Menopausal symptoms

Menopause is an intersectional experience



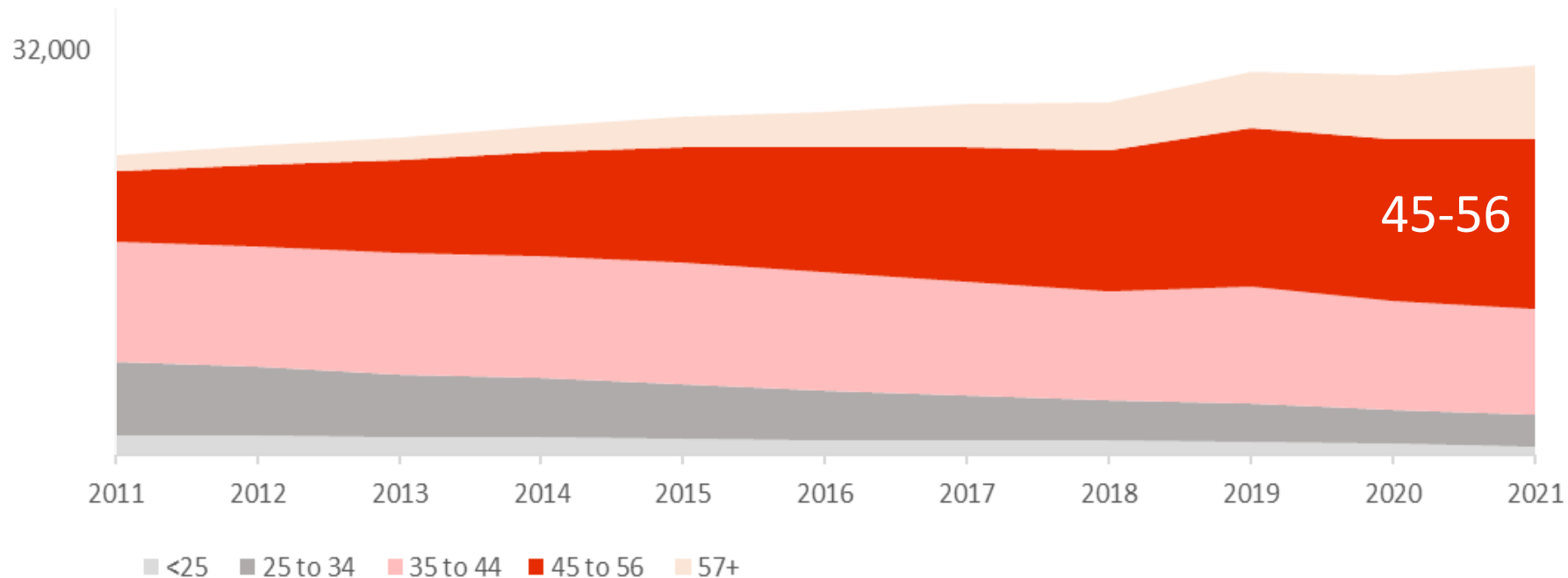


MENOPAUSE
WHILST
BLACK

HIV and menopause



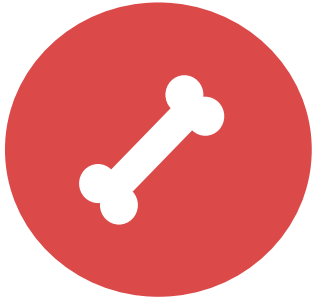
Number of women accessing HIV care by age group, 2011-2021







Menopause and HIV



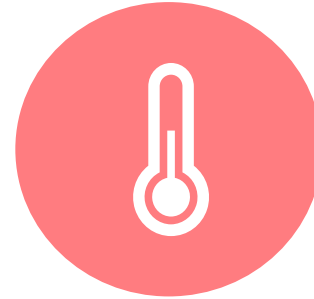
Bone disease



Heart disease



Tiredness



Hot flushes



Mental health



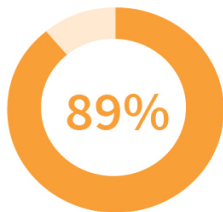
Findings: Menopausal symptoms in women living with HIV

Prevalence of menopausal symptoms



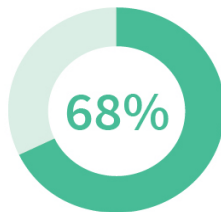
Somatic

hot flushes, palpitations, joint and muscle discomfort, sleep disturbance



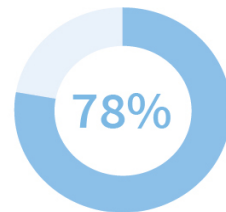
Urogenital

vaginal dryness, urinary tract symptoms, sexual problems



Psychological

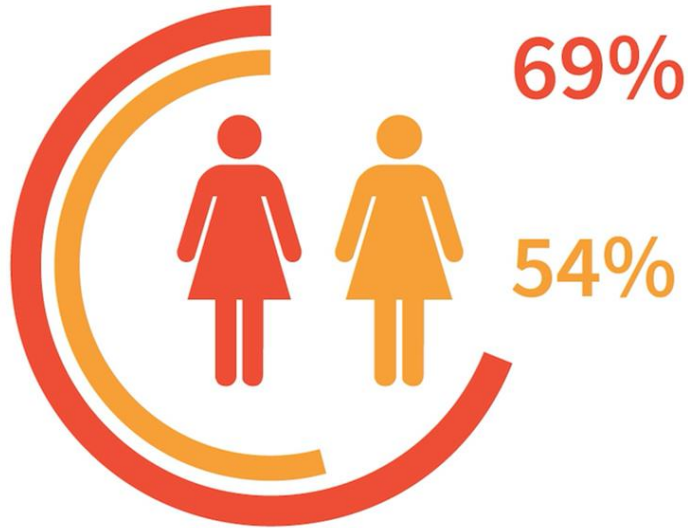
depression, anxiety, irritability, exhaustion



*It leaves you feeling 'what is going on here'? Is it HIV?
Is it the menopause?*



HIV and sexual function



Women with HIV reporting ≥ 1 sexual problem in past 1 year

Women without HIV reporting ≥ 1 sexual problem in past 1 year



Impact of menopausal symptoms

- ⦿ Difficulties taking HIV medication
- ⦿ Missed HIV clinic appointments
- ⦿ Worse mental health
- ⦿ Poorer quality of life

If I wasn't coping with HIV and I was dealing with menopause alone, maybe it would be easier. I've got to cope with the two at the same time. If you haven't slept for the whole night and you need to take medication...it just gets so annoying.



PRIME Study Participant



Findings: Managing menopausal symptoms



47%

of women said they did not have sufficient information about the menopause

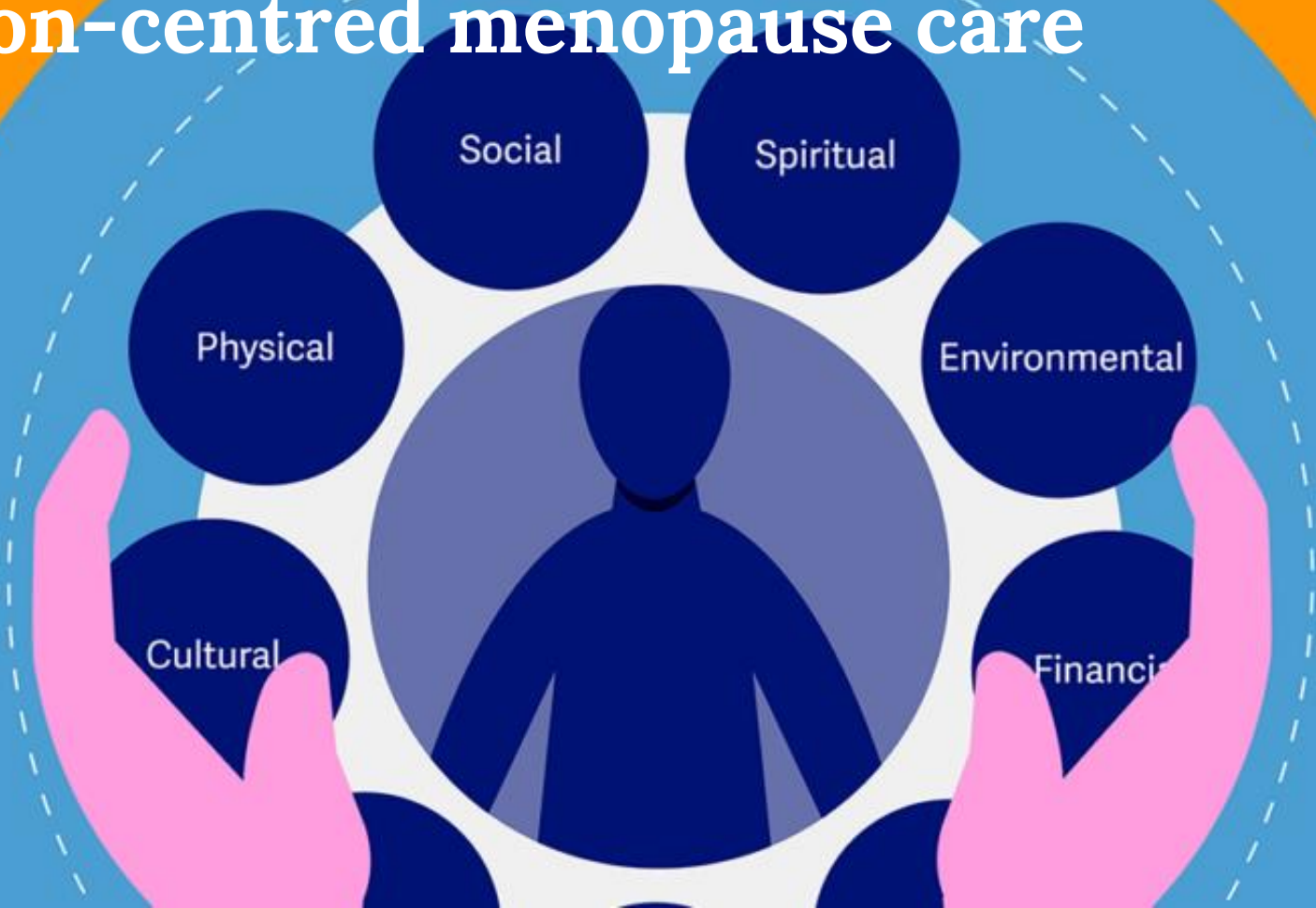


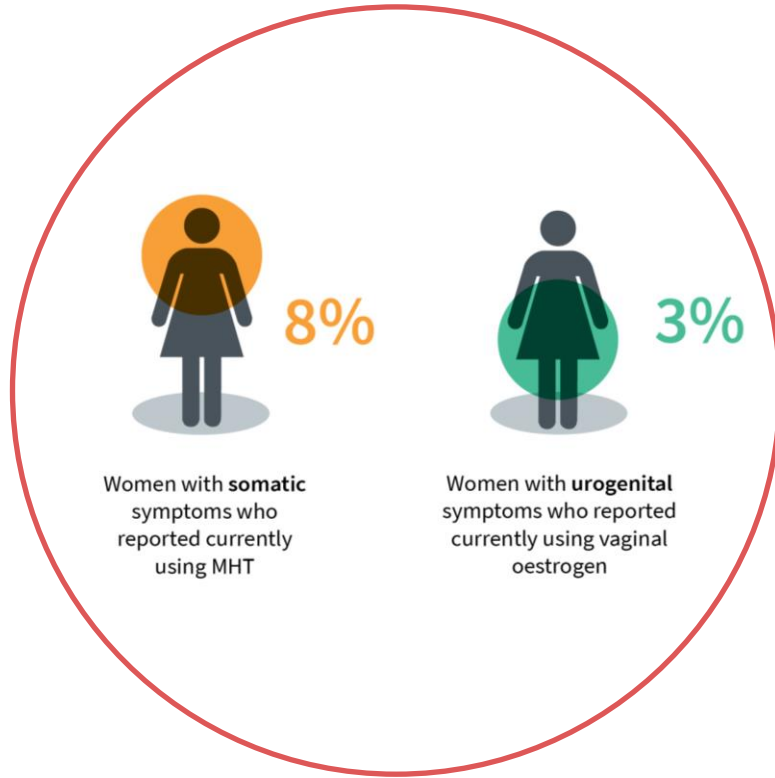
It would be good to hear about [menopause] earlier, then we would start noticing it in our bodies. It would be a thing that we know. Not a kind of shock. You don't know what is happening to you. Come and teach us. Tell us more.



Increased risk of other medical conditions

Person-centred menopause care





Menopausal hormone therapy

- Under-used in general and in HIV
- Can be used in HIV
- Safe and effective
- Reduces risk of bone disease
- Improves symptoms and quality of life
- Most HIV medications don't interact with hormones

HRT – understanding the risks of breast cancer

A comparison of lifestyle risk factors versus Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) treatment.

Difference in breast cancer incidence per 1,000 women aged 50-59. Approximate number of women developing breast cancer over the next five years.

Baseline

23

cases of breast cancer diagnosed per 1,000 of the UK general population over the next 5 years



An additional....

24

cases in women who are overweight or obese (BMI equal or greater than 30)



5

cases in women who drink 2 or more units of alcohol per day



4

cases in women on combined HRT



3

cases in women who are current smokers



Reduction

7

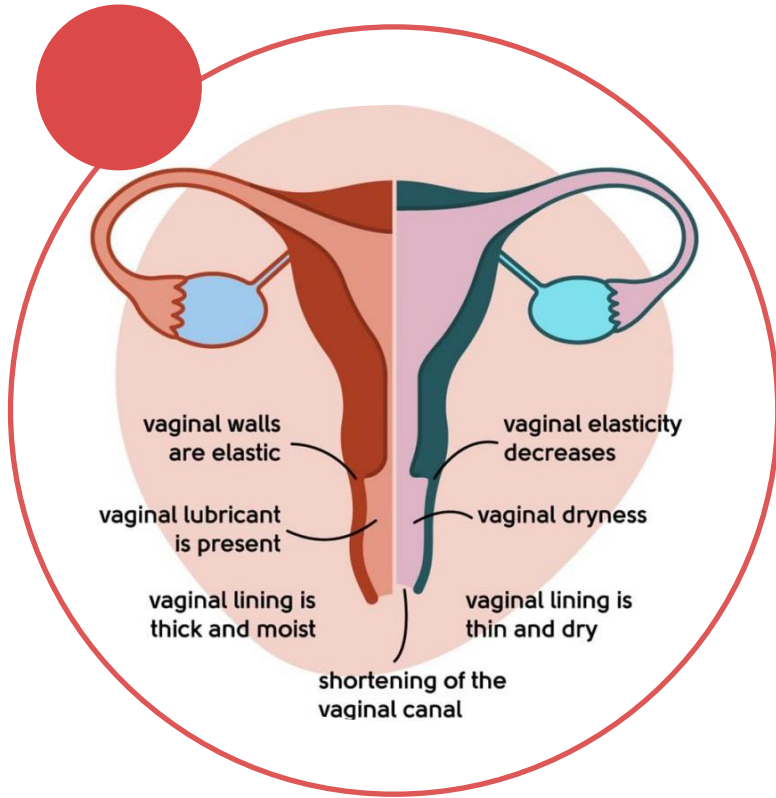
fewer cases in women who take at least 2½ hours moderate exercise per week



4

fewer cases in women on oestrogen only Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)





Vaginal symptoms

- Vaginal moisturisers
- Vaginal oestrogen
- Lubricant during sex
- Safe and effective



Surprise!




Recipes for
wellbeing





A GUIDE TO MENOPAUSE FOR WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV



Sophia 

HIV-specific information

GROWS





Key points

- ⦿ Menopause is a natural process but one that can be challenging
- ⦿ Health, social, relationship and work impacts
- ⦿ People with HIV may face additional challenges
- ⦿ Support and treatment is important

*I feel like I've got my
life back again.*



Thank you

