**Preparing for your Appointment with a Healthcare Professional**

When you book your appointment ask the receptionist who in the practice has a special interest in menopause and don’t be afraid to ask for a double appointment.

Do your research, look at the NICE guidelines on menopause, there is a section in the guidelines for patients and knowledge is power. (Copy in the guidance pack)

Track your symptoms and use the symptom checker so you have all your symptoms in front of you and you won`t forget any. Download the Balance app, it has a tracker, and you can download it and print it out to take with you.

If woman are over 45 years old then they do not need a blood test to diagnose menopause, it can be diagnosed on symptoms alone. This is because fluctuating hormones can give false results. (Ref: NHS NICE Guidelines 2015)

Woman under 45 years can have a blood test to measure Raised Follicle Stimulating Hormone levels these should be taken twice and 4 – 6 weeks apart.

Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area. In Dorset we have the Menopause Service at Poole Hospital, ask for a referral if you feel it would be useful for you or if you have existing or previous medical history/ problems. Please note they have a long waiting list.

Look at all your treatment options, there are alternative prescribed medications for those that do not wish or are unable to have HRT.

Before taking HRT, all women should be provided with information on the benefits and risks on an individual basis and given time to make an informed decision by their Health Care Practitioner.

Be prepared to discuss lifestyle changes that you may require support with.

If starting HRT, your HCP should review you in 3 months.

Remember, it is not a one size fits all with HRT, it can be common to experience side effects in the first 3 months of staring HRT and it may take time and your treatment tweaking to find what suits you and your body.