

A Healthy Menopause

Diet, nutrition and lifestyle guidance

with an introduction by Nigel Denby leading Harley Street dietician, author and broadcaster

The menopause is caused by a fall in the amount of the hormone oestrogen produced by the ovaries. Menopause is a time of transition, the end of the fertile years and an individual experience for every woman. The decline or absence of oestrogen can mean changes to energy levels, memory, bone health, hormones, urinary and heart health.

Good nutrition and small lifestyle changes can both contribute to a healthy menopause. Exercising and eating right can make a real difference to how you feel - and can even help to maintain health during and after the menopause.



Introduction by Nigel Denby *B.Sc (Hons), RD*, leading Harley Street dietician, author and broadcaster



Women's Health Concern is a charity I really enjoy supporting as it offers advice, reassurance and education on an increasingly wide range of health topics to women of all ages.

This new booklet is an important addition to the information available from WHC on issues relating to the menopause. I strongly endorse the guidance it provides on diet, nutrition and lifestyle.

There are more than 4 million women in the UK aged between 45 and 51 years who will experience the transition of menopause. I can say with confidence that it is likely a healthy diet and lifestyle will help

maintain health in menopausal women regardless of, for example, their HRT status. The good news is that concerns about weight, sweats, stress, mood swings, tearfulness and tiredness can be supported effectively by a healthy diet and lifestyle. You do not just have to grin and bear it.

Read on and good luck changing to a healthier, balanced and less erratic eating regime.

My top tips? Focus on 2-3 changes at a time and make each one a contract with yourself.



How to promote wellbeing



Physical, mental and emotional

Establish healthy eating habits :

Around the time of the menopause your oestrogen hormone is diminishing. To help your body adapt, you should ensure that you are getting enough of the right foods to provide specific nutrients to keep you healthy during the menopause and beyond.

A healthy, nutritious diet will help support a healthy menopause and general health during this time.

Eat plenty of :

- Fresh fruit, especially bananas. Most are rich in potassium to help support a healthy fluid retention. Fresh vegetables, especially dark leafy vegetables, which provide micronutrients
- Nuts and seeds, providing omega oils, calcium and fibre
- Legumes, as a good source of protein and vegetable iron (non-heme)
- Complex carbohydrates, such as oats, wholegrain bread, brown rice, to help sustain energy release
- Essential fatty acids (good fats) from oily fish, such as sardines, herring, pilchards,

Eat foods rich in :

- Calcium, for bone health
- Vitamin D, to ensure that your calcium intake is properly absorbed
- Fibre, via fruit, vegetables and wholegrains such as oats, brown rice, bulgur wheat, quinoa. Fibre helps digestion and can lower cholesterol and maintain steady blood sugar levels
- Potassium, may help to balance sodium to support a healthy water retention and hence help maintain a healthy blood pressure
- Tryptophan, found in proteins such as eggs, milk, sesame and sunflower seeds, which can help support serotonin production, the feel good chemical in your brain, to assist sleep and mood

Eat little and often to maintain blood sugar levels. If these drop, menopausal symptoms often increase.

Drink :

- Filtered water, to ensure good hydration and maintain body temperature
- Soya milk, a good source of omega 3 fatty acids, protein, vitamins and minerals
- Freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juice

Limit or moderate your intake:

- Salt – too much can affect high blood pressure and could also cause bloating
- Saturated fat - which can affect the arteries and heart health
- Stimulants such as alcohol, coffee, tea – which can hinder the absorption of nutrients and produce heat in the body. Spicy foods and hot foods and drinks
- Sugary foods –Junk food/ highly processed food, which can be high in salt and additives



Vitamins and Minerals

Take a suitable supplement, specifically formulated for menopausal women, such as those from the Menopace® range. Menopace® can be used alongside or instead of HRT.

Vitamins and minerals work together in balance so it is vital to take the appropriate ones in appropriate amounts and combinations and at the right times. The key nutrients will work in harmony with each other.

It is important to consult your health professional or nutritionalist, especially if you are taking prescribed medication.

Herbal Remedies

There are herbal remedies that are used to help maintain menopausal health. An increasing body of evidence shows that these may be helpful, however they should be used under the supervision of a doctor and a qualified herbalist as some herbs may have drug interactions or may not be suitable.

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| ● Alfalfa | To help maintain overall health |
| ● Balm | To help maintain a healthy nervous system |
| ● Dong Quai | To help maintain a healthy menopause |
| ● Gingko | To help maintain a healthy circulatory system (note : known to interact with other medications. Seek professional advice) |
| ● Ginseng | To help maintain energy |
| ● Red clover | To help maintain a healthy menopause |
| ● St John's Wort | Depression - (note : known to interact with other medications. Seek professional advice.) |
| ● Soy products | To help maintain a healthy menopause |
| ● Valerian | To help maintain a healthy night's sleep |

Get moving !

Keeping physically active during this time of change can help with many different health aspects - appetite, digestion, weight control, agility, heart health and bones - and can have a powerful, positive effect on emotions, mental health and your love life*.

A combination of these three types of regular exercise is recommended.

Weight bearing exercise:

Such as brisk walking, running, tennis, stair climbing, aerobics, helps to maintain bone density, particularly important at the time of the menopause when falling oestrogen levels can lead to a lower bone density.

Aerobic exercise:

Which raises the heart rate is good for heart health and circulation.

Stretching:

Such as yoga, maintains flexibility and joint movement.

Aim for 30 minutes per day of something you enjoy.

Bone health

As oestrogen levels diminish in the female body at menopause, bone density may lessen and can contribute to osteoporosis (brittle bones). Increasing calcium intake (low fat milk, yoghurt, tofu, cheese, sardines, whitebait, broccoli) may help support a healthy bone density. To ensure that the calcium is fully absorbed and deposited in the bones, it should be combined with foods rich in phosphorus such as peanuts, meat, cheese, onions, garlic; magnesium which can be found in wholegrains, nuts, legumes, green leafy vegetables, fish and meat; and combined with vitamin D (in fish oil, lentils, eggs, brown rice) and produced in the body naturally with enough sunlight exposure.

Avoid drinking tea and fizzy drinks with meals and steer clear of high protein slimming diets which can interfere with calcium absorption.



Positive lifestyle changes to help with the Menopause :

- Give up smoking (it's a big risk factor in osteoporosis and smoking doubles your odds of developing heart disease)
- Maintain a healthy body weight and lean body mass
- Keep a positive attitude
- Get emotional support – chat to friends
- Stress control – learn to relax
- Sleep in a cool room
- Dress in layers for easier temperature control
- Take 30 minutes each day to do something just for you
- Laugh and enjoy yourself !

*Our website gives up to date information and advice on sexual health awareness, contraception, HRT and a broad range of gynaecological issues.





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