

HEALTHY FOR LIFE

MANAGING MENOPAUSE



Credit: Chloe Sacks

Peri-menopause and menopause can last 10+ years, significantly affecting a woman's health and lifestyle. Average Australian woman can expect to live to around 80 years, spending approximately 30 years post-menopausal.

SOME OF THE MOST COMMON MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Irregular menstrual periods
- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Difficulty sleeping
- Mood changes

WOMEN MAY ALSO EXPERIENCE:

- With declining estrogen, you start to lose bone more quickly than you replace it, increasing risk of osteoporosis.
- Changing cholesterol levels.
- Weight gain

The good news is there's dietary strategies can help support your health and wellbeing during this time.



- Aim to eat small amounts of food every 3-4 hours. This helps balance sugar levels and prevents insulin spiking – a stress that will quickly throw your hormones out of place
- Consider herb supplements to better manage your menopause symptoms, such as: black cohosh, flaxseed, wild yam, dong quai, red clover and St. John's Wort
- Avoid spicy foods which may raise your body temperature and trigger a hot flush
- Eat your evening meal before 8pm consuming modest portions for a good night's rest. It's best if you can finish eating 2 hours before bed.
- Stick to no more than 3 cups of coffee a day as excess caffeine has been linked to osteoporosis.
- Set a limit of one glass of red wine per seating, which has been shown to be beneficial in reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke and dementia. Greater amounts of alcohol can trigger hot flushes.

Diet is essential in supporting your health as you travel through menopause and beyond. Certain foods are particularly beneficial in helping you feel at your best!

SOY

Soy is rich in isoflavones, phytoestrogens that have been thought to reduce menopause symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats. Phytoestrogens are plant-based foods that can have an estrogen-like effect on the body. Studies have shown a high intake of soy, from sources such as soya beans, tofu and soy milk can help balance hormones and reduces the risk of breast cancer.



FISH

Studies suggest fish oils and omega-3 fatty acids EPA can be used to reduce menopause symptoms including hot flushes, night sweats and depression. The anti-inflammatory properties in omega-3 fatty acids have shown to have a positive effect for women going through menopause by impacting on the preservation of the heart, breast, and bone health, while balancing moods.



FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND WHOLEGRAINS

Fibre rich vegetables reduce blood sugar peaks and troughs, and can help to steady insulin and other hormones. Whole grains are also a great source of fibre, found in bread, pasta, brown rice and cereals – great for regularity and reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, which increases at menopause. Aim for 2 of fruit and half a plate of vegetables or salad at both lunch and dinner.



PROTEIN

We all lose muscle as we age. Protein helps to build muscle and stay strong and keeps you feeling full. Chicken, fish, beans, nuts, seeds and tofu are all good sources of protein – ideally include a source of protein at both lunch and dinner.



FLAXSEED

Flaxseed is rich in omega-3 fatty acids (great for brain health) as well as fibre and protein and oestrogen-like compounds. Try sprinkling ground flaxseed on cereal, yogurt, and smoothies.



CALCIUM

Two in three Australian women will develop osteoporosis after the age of 60, meaning a higher risk of broken bones and reduced life expectancy. Low fat dairy products, tinned fish such as salmon and sardines, tofu, almonds and fortified non-dairy products such as soy milk can help fulfill your higher calcium needs. Also, check your vitamin D levels and enjoy some weight bearing exercise too!



CHOLESTEROL

If you have high cholesterol replace full fat milk, cheese and yogurt with lite varieties. Enjoy fish a few times a week or lean chicken rather than red meat. Instead of cakes, biscuits or pastries enjoy snacks such as nuts, wholegrain crackers with avocado or apple slices spread with peanut butter. Oats, olive oil and All-Bran are known to help reduce cholesterol.



Salmon and soba salad

- 180g soba noodles
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 4 salmon fillets (80-120g per fillet)
- 1/4 red onion (finely sliced)
- 1 carrot (grated)
- 1 small cucumber (halved, sliced)
- 1 red capsicum (finely sliced)
- 3 cups rocket (chopped roughly)
- 1/4 cup pepitas (pumpkin seeds)
- 4 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 3 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- sesame seeds for garnish



1. Boil noodles for 3-5 minutes or until al dente. Drain water and fill pot with cold water. Set aside.
2. Heat pan with half the sesame oil on medium heat and place the salmon fillets skin down. Cook salmon fillets for 3-5 minutes on skin side and then turn over to cook for another 2 minutes and set aside.
3. In a large salad bowl, add vegetables, and pumpkin seeds.
4. Pour vinegars, remainder of sesame oil and soy sauce over salad and combine well.
5. Drain noodles. Toss through salad, mix well.
6. To serve, divide the noodle salad between bowls and place salmon on top.
7. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.

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MANAGING YOUR WEIGHT

You may find your appetite has diminished, as we age we tend to need less calories. For portion control enjoy half a plate of salads or vegetables with a palm sized piece of lean protein such as chicken breast or fish, plus a medium handful of brown rice, wholemeal pasta or sweet potato for your carbohydrates. Snack only if you feel hungry, and if you eat out frequently be mindful these meals are almost always higher in calories than cooking at home. Plus, remember to drink 2 L of water a day and plan some regular exercise into your daily routine.

