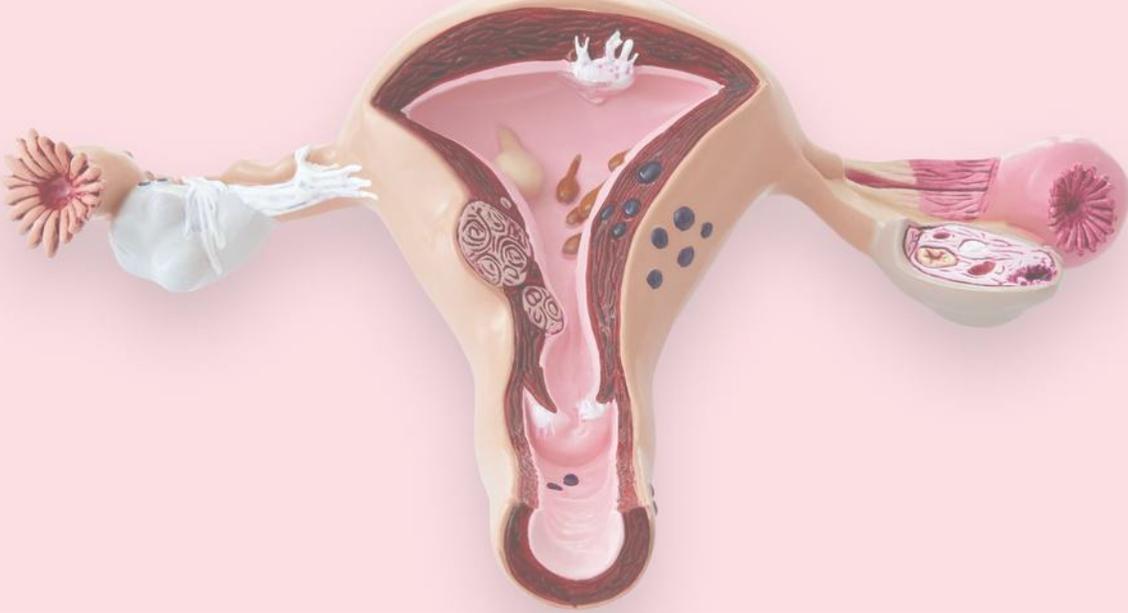


FLCCC[®]
A L L I A N C E
H O N E S T M E D I C I N E [™]

Nutrition for Perimenopause & Menopause

Key Nutrition and Lifestyle Strategies
to Alleviate Symptoms and Support
Women Through This Transition



Menopause

Menopause typically occurs around the average age of 51, although it can range from the late 40s to early 50s. This is the point at which the ovaries, which are responsible for egg production, stop producing estrogen. Estrogen, a key hormone involved in sexual and reproductive development as well as various metabolic and cognitive functions, declines significantly during this time.

The transition into menopause doesn't happen overnight. In fact, there's often a span of 7-10 years leading up to and following menopause, known as perimenopause and postmenopause. During **perimenopause**—the years before menopause—the body's estrogen levels begin to fluctuate, sometimes unpredictably. These fluctuations can lead to various symptoms like irregular menstrual cycles, hot flashes, and mood swings, as the body gradually adjusts to lower estrogen levels. **Postmenopause** refers to the years following menopause, where estrogen remains at a consistently lower level, marking the end of the reproductive years.



Symptoms of Menopause and Perimenopause

- **Menstrual Cycle Changes:** Changes in cycle length, frequency, or blood flow (heavier or lighter periods), missed periods or irregular periods
- **Hot Flashes and Night Sweats:** Sudden feelings of warmth, often intense, that can cause sweating and flushing of the skin
- **Sleep Disturbances:** Difficulty falling or staying asleep, often linked to night sweats, waking up earlier than usual
- **Vaginal Dryness:** Reduced natural lubrication, leading to discomfort or pain during sexual activity
- **Increased susceptibility to vaginal infections**
- **Urinary Tract Changes:** Increased frequency of urination
- **Increased susceptibility to urinary tract infections (UTIs)**
- **Potential urinary leakage or incontinence**

Symptoms of Menopause and Perimenopause

- **Weight Gain, Especially Around the Midsection:** A common shift in body fat distribution, with weight gain often accumulating around the abdomen
- **Changes in Mood:** Mood swings, irritability, and increased emotional sensitivity
- **Feelings of anxiety or depression**
- **Decreased Libido and Sexual Function:** Reduced interest in sexual activity
- **Possible difficulty achieving orgasm**
- **Memory and Concentration Issues:** Difficulty concentrating or remembering things, sometimes referred to as "brain fog"



Symptoms of Menopause and Perimenopause



- **Hair and Skin Changes:**
Thinning hair or hair loss
- **Skin changes:** Including dryness and a loss of elasticity
- **Joint and Muscle Aches:**
Increased joint stiffness and muscle pain, potentially due to estrogen's role in reducing inflammation
- **Breast Changes:** Breast tenderness or changes in breast tissue, possible increase in breast size or fullness
- **Digestive Issues:** Bloating and changes in digestion, sometimes associated with hormonal changes
- **Headaches and Migraines:**
Some women experience an increase in headaches or migraines, particularly if they've had them in the past

Symptoms of Menopause and Perimenopause

- **Changes in Body Odor:** Increased body odor or changes in how it smells due to hormonal fluctuations
- **Heart Palpitations:** Occasional sensations of a racing or irregular heartbeat
- **Dry Eyes and Mouth:** Reduced tear and saliva production, leading to dryness in the eyes and mouth
- **Increased Risk of Osteoporosis:** Bone density loss over time, which can increase the risk of fractures



Menopause

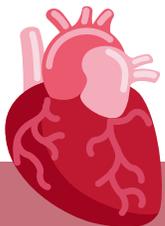
Menopause is a natural phase in the aging journey of women. The hormonal shifts associated with menopause can lead to various symptoms and also elevate health risks following this transition.

After menopause, women are at higher risk for heart disease and osteoporosis.



Heart Disease

Estrogen helps protect against heart-related conditions such as stroke and heart attacks. As the female body produces less estrogen, the risk for heart disease increases. In addition, at this time in a woman's life, the risks for other conditions that affect heart health such as high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and a sedentary lifestyle are more common.



Osteoporosis

Both men and women experience a decline in bone mass as they age; however, women face a more rapid loss during the 4 to 8 years following menopause, primarily due to a reduction in estrogen production. This bone loss subsequently heightens the risk of developing osteoporosis.





Nutrition Tips for Menopause

1

Drink adequate fluids

2

Limit or avoid alcohol

3

Limit or avoid spicy foods and caffeine

4

Eat nutrient-dense foods and prioritize protein intake.

5

Manage weight through lifestyle strategies

Nutrition Tips for Menopause

Drink adequate fluids

Menopausal symptoms like hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, and bladder infections may be alleviated with proper hydration. Focus on unsweetened beverages and water-rich fruits and vegetables to maintain hydration levels. Be mindful to drink more water as needed, especially during periods of increased activity or heat exposure.



Limit or avoid alcohol

Excessive alcohol consumption over time can disrupt sleep, impair memory, and contribute to mood disorders, as well as increase the risk of health conditions like osteoporosis, high blood pressure, stroke, and ulcers. To support overall health, it's recommended that men limit alcohol intake to 2 drinks or less per day, and women to 1 drink or less per day.



Limit or avoid spicy foods and caffeine

Spicy foods and caffeinated beverages may worsen hot flashes for some women. Opt for flavoring meals with herbs, sweet spices, alliums, mild peppers, or citrus juice instead of heat-inducing ingredients. To reduce caffeine intake, prioritize quality sleep, gradually decrease caffeine consumption, and choose alternatives like decaffeinated coffee or herbal teas



Nutrition Tips for Menopause

Consume Nutrient-Dense Foods

Nutrient-dense foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals. Examples include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes, and lean proteins like fish and poultry. Incorporating more nutrient-dense foods can enhance overall health during perimenopause and menopause.

Tips for Increasing Nutrient-Dense Foods in Your Diet:

- Plan meals ahead: By organizing nutrient-dense meals in advance, you set yourself up for success in serving them.
- Explore healthy convenience options: Consider bagged leafy greens, canned beans, and frozen berries for quick additions.
- Incorporate plant foods into mixed dishes: Add more fruits and vegetables to stir-fries, whole grain pasta, and smoothies.
- Increase protein intake: Ensure you are getting enough protein in all your meals.
- Enhance flavor with additional ingredients and cooking techniques: Use herbs, spices, citrus, and alliums to season your dishes. Experiment with various cooking methods like steaming, roasting, and braising to create a range of flavors.



Nutrition Tips for Menopause

Manage weight through lifestyle strategies

Weight gain is a common symptom of perimenopause and menopause. If weight loss or maintenance is a treatment goal, the following lifestyle strategies support weight management.

- **Choose meals and snacks with a balance of macronutrients (protein, fat, carbohydrates):**
Protein helps contribute to fullness in between meals.
- **Focus on an eating pattern with nutrient-dense whole foods:**
Fiber in plant foods helps contribute to fullness in between meals. Also, ultra-processed foods may contain excess calories from saturated fat, added sugar, etc.
- **Practice regular physical activity that includes strength training.**



How to support weight management:

- Avoid restrictive diets, cleanses, or extreme exercise plans.
- For most meals, eat non-starchy vegetables and moderate portions of lean protein and whole starch.
- Measure out portions of higher-calorie foods like oils and nuts.
- Set SMART goals for daily lifestyle habits.
- Give permission to enjoy fun foods such as desserts and snack foods as part of a balanced eating pattern.
- Choose mostly unsweetened beverages such as water, seltzer, tea, and coffee.
- Avoid or limit alcohol.
- Get adequate sleep (7-9 hours for adults).
- Engage in stress management techniques.

Key Nutrients During Menopause

After menopause, women are at higher risk for heart disease and osteoporosis. Several key nutrients play a role in heart and bone health during menopause.

Unsaturated Fats

Also known as heart-healthy fats, unsaturated fats are found in mostly plant foods such as oils, avocado, nuts, and seeds, as well as fatty fish. Eating a diet rich in unsaturated fats, as opposed to saturated fats, is associated with a lower risk of heart disease.



Calcium

Calcium is a mineral that the body uses to build and maintain bone health, in addition to other functions. Calcium is found in dairy products, canned fish with bones, dark green leafy vegetables, tofu made with calcium sulfate, and fortified beverages.



Key Nutrients During Menopause

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for bone health because it helps the body absorb calcium. Food sources of vitamin D include fortified milk (dairy and some non-dairy products), fortified cereals, egg yolks, and fatty fish. The body can also make vitamin D from sun exposure, though whether this allows the body to reach vitamin D needs depends on many factors. Because foods and sun exposure may not be the most reliable ways to get adequate vitamin D, speak to a practitioner about vitamin D testing and supplements.



Before, during, and after menopause, women should strive to eat food sources of unsaturated fat (instead of saturated fat), calcium, and vitamin D. Women should also speak to their practitioners about nutrient needs.

Supporting Overall Health During Menopause

On average, the transition into menopause is about 7 years but can be as long as 14 years.

Experiencing a prolonged phase of change can be challenging for many women. Although hormonal shifts are unavoidable, women have the power to manage their lifestyle choices and can enhance their overall well-being during the menopausal transition.

Eat mostly nutrient-dense whole foods and limit or avoid alcohol, spicy foods, and caffeine.

See a practitioner for wellness exams plus dental and eye exams.

Drink adequate fluids, mostly unsweetened beverages.

Do at least 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, including at least 3 strength-training sessions.

Key Supplements During Menopause



Supplement

Benefit

Calcium and Vitamin D

Support bone health, reduce the risk of osteoporosis, and aid in calcium absorption.

Magnesium

Alleviates muscle cramps, supports sleep, reduces anxiety, and helps with bone density.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Supports heart health, reduces inflammation, and may help alleviate mood swings and depression,

B-Complex Vitamins

Support energy production, reduce fatigue, and assist in managing hormonal fluctuations.

Vitamin E

May reduce hot flashes and night sweats, and supports skin health.

Vitamin K2

Works with vitamin D to improve bone density and supports cardiovascular health.

Ashwagandha

Helps manage stress, supports adrenal function, and may reduce anxiety and hot flashes.

Black Cohosh

May alleviate hot flashes, night sweats, and mood changes.

Red Clover

Contains phytoestrogens that mimic estrogen to help reduce hot flashes and improve bone health.

Evening Primrose Oil

May help with hormonal balancing, particularly for hot flashes and breast tenderness.

Probiotics

Support gut health, which is closely linked to hormonal balance and overall well-being.

Collagen

Supports skin elasticity, joint health, and helps reduce hair thinning and brittle nails.

Adaptogens (e.g., Rhodiola)

Boost energy, improve focus, and combat fatigue associated with hormonal changes.

