

MENOPAUSE AND NUTRITION SUMMARY

What is the menopause? A point in time when there has been no menstrual period during the previous 12 months, due to the decline in oestrogen production.

Who? Affects anyone who has periods.

When? Average age is 51 years in the UK; but can occur naturally between 40 and 60 years. Can also happen due to surgery, chemotherapy or sometimes an unknown reason.

Early Menopause: pre 45 years old, affects about 5% of women and likely due to early puberty, smoking, being underweight or hereditary.

Stages:

Peri-Menopause: Transitional phase, start to notice symptoms, can occur 4-8 years pre-menopause

Menopause: Diagnosed by a medical professional, symptoms still occurring.

Post-Menopause: Most people have minimal symptoms.

MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS AND LIFESTYLE

Symptoms: No two women will experience the same symptoms

Psychological symptoms include - Mood swings, irritability, brain fog, low mood

Physical symptoms include - Hot flushes, night sweats, bladder issues, vaginal issues

Weight gain is one of the most common side effects.

- Average woman gains 1.5kg/year during peri-menopause transition (can result in +10kg overall)
- Most weight accumulates around the abdomen and upper body.

Why?

- Visceral fat increases from 5-8% total body weight to 10-15%.
- Metabolism slows by around 10% and muscle mass decreases.
- Lead to weight gain, increasing risk of heart attacks, strokes and T2D.

FOLLOW THE EATWELL GUIDE

Eatwell Guide

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturated	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day

Fruit and vegetables



Eat less often and in small amounts

Choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar



6-8 a day

Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
Eat more beans and pulses, 2 portions of sustainably sourced fish per week, one of which is oily. Eat less red and processed meat



Dairy and alternatives

Choose lower fat and lower sugar options



Oil & spreads
Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Every day:

- 3-4 portions starchy carbohydrates
- 2-3 portions of dairy and protein
- 5+ portions of fruit and vegetables
- 30g fibre
- Minimal fat, opting for unsaturated options instead of butter
- 1.5 – 2L fluids

Phytoestrogens:

- Have a mild oestrogen effect, when consumed regularly
- 70-80% USA women report hot flushes vs 10-20% Asian women
- Found in plant foods such as soya (tofu, edamame beans, miso, tempeh) and flaxseeds, lentils, chickpeas

Heart Healthy Foods:

- 77% of women aged 45-64 years have high cholesterol → increased risk for heart disease
- Mediterranean diet is beneficial – swap saturated for unsaturated fats
- Oats and barley contain beta-glucan which can help lower blood cholesterol

Fibre:

- Increase diversity of gut microbiome
- May support mood and manage anxiety
- Found in wholegrains e.g. brown rice and pasta, fruits and vegetables

MENOPAUSE AND OSTEOPOROSIS

Women are at a greater risk of osteoporosis, half of women over 50 will suffer a fracture due to poor bone health vs 20% men.

Protein:

- Reduce muscle loss, maintain healthy bones
- Helps with production of serotonin – important mood and brain function
- Found in pulses, beans, chicken, eggs

Calcium:

- 2-3 portions of calcium rich foods each day
- Found in dairy, fortified plant milks and breakfast cereals.

Vitamin D:

- Key in supporting bone function, immune function
- Fat soluble so better absorbed alongside a meal
- Sunlight is a natural source, fortified in some mushrooms and cereals or take a supplement
- Supplement recommended between October and March, aim for 10µg/ day.

Weight-bearing exercises can help to strengthen bones

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) – uses oestrogen to replace your body’s own levels.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) – talking therapy to discuss physical symptoms and low mood and anxiety.



Speak to healthcare professionals, colleagues, family members or friends. Share your experience and ask for help/ advice when needed.

Lottie Jones, Registered Nutritionist, ESS Nutrition & Wellbeing Officer

If you have any questions or require any support, please don't hesitate to contact us at ess.wellness@compass-goup.co.uk