

Menopause and health

This resource explains how menopause can influence different areas of your health, including weight, diet, diabetes risk, heart and bone health, physical activity, stress, sleep, and lifestyle choices such as alcohol and smoking. Understanding these changes can help you make informed decisions about your wellbeing throughout the menopause transition.

What you might notice:

You may notice changes to your weight, energy levels, sleep, mood, and overall physical health. Some symptoms, such as hot flushes, night sweats, palpitations, changes in blood sugar, or increased aches and pains may appear suddenly or fluctuate. You may also find that advice you previously followed no longer works as effectively, or that you feel confused about what is “normal” for your age versus what is related to menopause.

What may help:

Weight gain

During perimenopause and menopause, gaining around 10lb (4.5kg) is common worldwide. This is influenced by hormonal changes, particularly reduced oestrogen which increases abdominal weight gain. Natural ageing reduces muscle mass, which means your body may need fewer calories. Lifestyle, genetics, and reduced physical activity can also play a role.

Diet

Eating a healthy diet during menopause doesn't mean changing your culture or avoiding foods you love. Try to eat a mix of colourful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, and traditional foods prepared in healthier ways (like baking, grilling, or boiling). Try to cut back on deep-fried foods, sugary drinks, and highly processed foods when you can. Small changes can make a big difference to your overall health.

More information: <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/menopause-diet.html>



Diabetes

Hormonal changes can influence how your body manages blood sugar, making perimenopause and menopause a time when some people are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Ageing, weight changes, and reduced activity also play a part. If you notice new symptoms or feel unsure, speak openly with your GP.

Heart health

Falling oestrogen levels increase the risk of coronary heart disease, particularly if you already have high blood pressure. Eating a heart-healthy diet and monitoring your blood pressure can help support cardiovascular health.

More information:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/heart-health.html>

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/women-with-a-heart-condition/menopause-and-heart-disease>

Bone health

Declining oestrogen causes rapid bone density loss, increasing the risk of osteoporosis. Preparing early through weight-bearing exercise and a diet rich in vitamin D and calcium is key.

More information:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html>

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/calcium.html>

Activity

Being active in any way that suits your body and your culture can help reduce stress, support your weight, improve mood, and lessen the number and intensity of hot flushes. Regular movement is good for everyone, and it does not have to mean going to the gym.

Try to include activities that build or maintain muscle and keep you moving. These could be:

- Resistance training (using your own body weight, bands, bottles of water, or weights)
- Walking at a pace that feels comfortable for you



- Hiking or hill walking, if accessible
- Cycling, including outdoor bikes or indoor cycles
- Pilates or yoga, including chair-based options
- Racket sports like badminton, pickle ball, paddle, tennis or table tennis
- Stair climbing or using steps in your home or community
- Skipping or gentle jumping, if suitable for your joints
- Dancing - traditional, cultural, social, or in your own living room
- Cultural movement practices such as bhangra, Zumba, African dance, tai chi, qigong, folk dance, or community dance sessions
- Daily-life movement, such as gardening, housework, carrying shopping, childcare, or walking to the bus stop

There is no single “right” way to be active. What matters most is choosing movement that feels enjoyable, accessible, and safe for you, at your pace, in your body, and in a way that fits your community and lifestyle.

More information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/how-to-improve-strength-flexibility/#what-are-strength-exercises>

<https://www.womeninsport.org/our-work/campaigning/women-in-sport-x-getty-images-menopause-curation/>

Fluids and alcohol

Certain drinks, such as tea, coffee, caffeinated soft drinks, and alcohol, can trigger or worsen hot flashes and disrupt sleep. Opting for decaffeinated drinks and reducing alcohol intake, especially before bed, may help. Stay hydrated throughout the day.

Stress

Hormonal fluctuations can heighten anxiety, low mood, and overwhelm. Stress can worsen hot flashes and night sweats, disrupt sleep, and increase cortisol levels, which affects insulin sensitivity and weight.

Helpful stress-reduction tools include:

- Breathing exercises
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Regular physical activity
- Taking intentional time for yourself



Speak to your GP if you are experiencing panic attacks or high levels of anxiety.

Sleep

Menopause-related sleep disruption is common and can affect immunity, metabolism, and long-term health.

Tips include:

- Keeping your bedroom cool / using a fan
- Wearing natural, breathable fabrics (or sleeping naked)
- Avoiding caffeine, alcohol, smoking, and spicy foods in the evening
- Reducing screen time before bed or using blue-light-blocking glasses
- Sticking to consistent sleep/ wake times

Smoking

Smoking can trigger hot flushes and worsen bone and heart health. Support is available if you want to reduce or quit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/find-your-local-stop-smoking-service/>

When to seek support:

Seek help if your symptoms feel overwhelming, affect your health or quality of life, or if you're unsure whether what you're experiencing is menopause, ageing, or something else. You should also seek support if lifestyle changes alone aren't helping or if you're worried about heart health, diabetes risk, bone health, or sleep.

Questions you may want to ask a clinician:

- Are my symptoms related to menopause, ageing, or another condition?
- What changes can help support my weight, heart health, or sleep?
- Do I need tests for blood sugar, cholesterol, or bone density?
- How do my lifestyle, medications, or existing health conditions affect my menopause experience?
- Should I consider HRT or other treatments based on my health profile?





Remember that you're not alone, and you don't have to wait until things feel overwhelming to talk. Reaching out can help you understand what your body is going through and make sure you have the support you need.

