



# **The Ultimate Guide to Nutrition for Menopause**



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# Menopause

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Menopause occurs when the ovaries, the female glands in which eggs form, stop producing estrogen. Estrogen is a hormone that plays a role in sexual and reproductive development, in addition to other functions.

Perimenopause describes the years leading up to menopause when the body begins to produce fluctuating amounts of estrogen.

**A woman's average age at the onset of menopause is 51.**

## Symptoms of Menopause and Perimenopause

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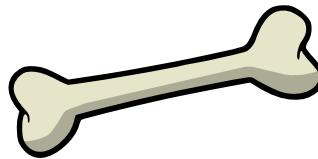
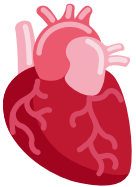
- Menstrual cycle changes (cycle length, cycle frequency, and/or blood flow)
- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Sleep disturbances
- Vaginal dryness
- Urinary tract changes
- Weight gain, especially around the midsection
- Changes in mood

# Menopause

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Menopause is a normal part of the aging process for women. Hormonal changes related to menopause not only may result in symptoms, but they also increase health risks after menopause.

**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

While both men and women lose bone mass throughout the aging process, bone loss in women accelerates in the 4 to 8 years after menopause due to the body's decreased production of estrogen. As bone loss occurs, the risk for osteoporosis increases.





# Nutrition Tips for Menopause

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Drink adequate fluids

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Limit or avoid alcohol

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Limit or avoid spicy foods and caffeine

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Eat nutrient-dense foods

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Manage weight through lifestyle strategies

# Nutrition Tips for Menopause

## Drink adequate fluids.

Menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, or bladder infections may be improved by proper hydration. Choose mostly unsweetened beverages and water-rich fruits and veggies for hydration. Hydrate more when necessary such as during physical activity.



## Limit or avoid alcohol.

Drinking excessive alcohol over a long period of time may aggravate hot flashes, disturb sleep, and worsen health conditions (including osteoporosis, high blood pressure, stroke, ulcers, memory loss, and mood disorders). It is recommended that women consume 1 drink or less per day.



## Limit or avoid spicy foods and caffeine.

Spicy foods and caffeine-containing drinks and foods may aggravate hot flashes in some women. Instead of using heat-containing ingredients, flavor food with herbs, sweet spices, alliums, mild peppers, and citrus juice. To cut back on caffeine, focus on getting proper sleep, taper off caffeine consumption gradually, and choose decaffeinated coffee and herbal tea.





# Nutrition Tips for Menopause

## Eat nutrient-dense foods.

Nutrient-dense foods are foods with an abundance of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals. These include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes, and lean proteins such as fish and poultry. Eating more nutrient-dense foods supports overall health during perimenopause and menopause.

How to eat more nutrient-dense foods:

- Plan meals in advance: Create a weekly menu, batch-cook staples, and pack healthy snacks for convenience.
- Stock nutrient-dense staples: Keep your pantry, fridge, and freezer filled with whole grains, lean proteins, and colorful produce.
- Make simple swaps: Replace refined foods with whole grains, healthy fats, and roasted or fresh alternatives.
- Follow a meal framework: Build meals with protein, veggies, healthy fats, and whole grains or starchy veggies.
- Try new foods weekly: Experiment with nutrient-dense options like chia seeds, Swiss chard, or bok choy to keep meals interesting.



# Nutrition Tips for Menopause

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## Manage weight through lifestyle strategies.

Weight gain is a common challenge during perimenopause and menopause. If weight management is your goal, these lifestyle strategies can help support healthy weight loss or maintenance.

- **Focus on whole, nutrient-dense foods:** Choose whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats, veggies, and fruits to stabilize blood sugar and nourish your body.
- **Prioritize protein intake:** Include protein-rich foods with every meal to support muscle mass and increase satiety.
- **Measure portions of higher-calorie foods:** Be mindful of portion sizes for calorie-dense foods like oils and nuts to avoid excess calorie intake.
- **Allow enjoyment of fun foods:** Include desserts and snack foods in moderation as part of a balanced eating pattern to maintain a healthy relationship with food.
- **Practice mindful eating:** Eat slowly, listen to your hunger and fullness cues, and avoid distractions to prevent overeating.
- **Limit sugary beverages and alcohol:** Cut back on sugary drinks and moderate alcohol consumption to reduce excess calorie intake and support blood sugar balance.
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to support metabolism and prevent mistaking thirst for hunger.
- **Incorporate daily movement:** Activities like walking and yoga complement workouts and improve energy balance.
- **Emphasize strength training:** Engage in resistance exercises like weightlifting to maintain muscle and boost metabolism.
- **Get quality sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night to regulate hunger hormones and support metabolism.
- **Manage stress levels:** Practice stress-reducing techniques like meditation or deep breathing to lower cortisol levels and avoid stress-related weight gain.



# 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 foods 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.

Living through an extensive period of change is difficult for many women. While hormonal changes are inevitable, women are in control of their lifestyle habits and can support their overall health during the menopausal transition.

Eat mostly whole, nutrient-dense 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 2 strength-training sessions.



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NUTRITION

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