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MENOPAUSE FOOD AND FITNESS GUIDE

HOW TO STOP SURVIVING AND START THRIVING

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WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

The literal meaning of the word 'menopause' is the last menstrual period. The run up to this begins with Perimenopause, where the ovaries begin to run out of eggs, and the production of female hormones begins to decline.

Periods become irregular and many women experience symptoms such as hot flushes and mood swings. This is Perimenopause phase usually begins between the ages of 40 and 50 and lasts an average of 3-6 years. A woman is deemed to have reached menopause when she has not had a period for 12 months.

Other symptoms of Perimenopause can include poor sleep, brain fog, weight gain around the middle, thinning hair and skin, achy joints, increased urgency / frequency of urination, headaches, migraines, loss of self, and less resilience to stress.

Not fun! But what many women don't realise is that there is often SO MUCH we can do with nutrition, exercise and lifestyle choices that can help.

This is a really simple guide to help you optimise your nutrition and exercise to nourish and support your body. Please remember if you have any concerns or doubts, seek advice from your doctor.

WHO I AM AND HOW I CAN HELP YOU

Hi, I'm Hayley. This is me (on the left!) with my mum, trying out a spot of Tai Chi. We lift weights together twice a week. I've been a personal trainer for over 8 years and worked with hundreds of women to help them get slimmer, fitter, stronger, healthier and happier.

It's an amazing job and I love it.

A lot of my clients are women who have experienced, or are going through the process of, menopause, and in 2016 I became a certified '3rd age Woman Instructor' through Burrell education so I could learn how to help them better.



That certification and the knowledge and experience gained since has enabled me to create this mini ebook. Menopause is still not talked about enough. The information and advice given can often be confusing, and many women simply suffer in silence. My aim here is to give you some simple tools and guidance on how to feel at your best through menopause and beyond. Every woman is different, but my experience so far has taught me there will be something (or plenty of things) in here that can help you. If you have any questions at any point, please feel free to drop me an email at hayley@performanceproject.co.uk

NUTRITION EXPLAINED

To understand what to eat for optimal health and happy hormones, we need to delve into the world of nutrition and the three macronutrients – protein, carbs and fat. Over the next few pages I'll break these down. Once you have an understanding of what foods contain each of the macronutrients, you can start to build a balanced diet that incorporates everything your body needs.

Calories are very important to consider too, particularly if your goal is to lose weight. The focus of this book is on nutrition for health and hormones, so I won't give in depth calorie guidance here. However, if you incorporate the tips in this book for nutrition and exercise, focus on minimising stress and practice mindful eating, you may well find you lose weight as a by-product. I would encourage you to stay aware of the calories you are consuming while creating a healthy, active, enjoyable lifestyle as your priority. If you need more help with weight loss, please get in touch.

Tips for a well-balanced day of nutrition:

- ✓ A source of protein in each meal
- ✓ 1-2 servings of vegetables or fruit with each meal
- ✓ 1-2 servings of healthy fats each day
- ✓ 1-2 servings of high fibre, slow-digesting carbs

More info on this over the next few pages.



NUTRITION EXPLAINED – PROTEIN

PROTEIN – *think meat, fish, eggs, Greek yogurt, lentils, beans, nuts, seeds, whey protein*

KEY POINTS

- Protein is VERY important for health, strength and weight loss
- Most women don't eat enough of it
- Ideally we want to get one good source of protein in each meal (3-4 servings per day)
- Protein helps repair, strengthen and tone your muscles after exercise
- This boosts your metabolism and helps you burn more fat
- Protein takes longer to digest than carbs or fat do, so it keeps you fuller for longer
- If you don't eat enough protein (and don't use your muscles by exercising), a good chunk of the weight you lose on a diet will come from muscle tissue rather than fat.

PROTEIN

Good protein sources include:

- ✓ Chicken
- ✓ Turkey
- ✓ Lean beef
- ✓ Lamb
- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Seafood
- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Grilled bacon
- ✓ Whey protein powder
- ✓ Greek yogurt
- ✓ Beans and pulses (especially puy lentils)
- ✓ Nuts and seeds (just be mindful of portion sizes)



NUTRITION EXPLAINED – FAT

For HEALTHY fats, *think avocado, salmon, mackerel, eggs, coconut oil, olive oil, nuts, seeds*

KEY POINTS

- Foods high in fat are very dense in calories, so we need to be aware of portion sizes, but we DO NOT want to be avoiding them in this (or any other) phase of life
- Eating some healthy fats regularly is essential for health and hormone function
- Around 2-3 servings of good fats daily works very well for many women
- Every cell in your body needs fat in order to exist and function properly
- Fat helps you stay fuller for longer and keeps your blood sugar levels more stable
- Replacing a portion of processed or starchy carbs with a serving of healthy fats can be very beneficial for energy levels, hormones and long term weight loss
- If you are aiming to lose weight, it can be better to mostly eat your fats in the form of foods such as salmon, avocado and eggs, and reduce consumption from oils. Oils are easy to consume without your mind really registering the calories, meaning you feel like you've eaten less than you actually have, whereas food sources that you can actually see as you eat can be more satisfying. This is just a tip and there is nothing wrong with eating oils – olive oil in particular has links to improving heart health - as long as you are aware of the portion size.

FAT

Quality fat sources and portions sizes:

- ✓ Avocado (half)
- ✓ Oily fish (palm size fillet)
- ✓ Coconut oil (2-3 tsp)
- ✓ Olive oil (2-3 tsp)
- ✓ Nuts and seeds (1 tbsp)
- ✓ Nut butters (1 tbsp)
- ✓ Organic butter (1 tbsp)
- ✓ Flaxseed (1 - 2 tbsp)
- ✓ Chia seeds (1 tbsp)



NUTRITION EXPLAINED – CARBOHYDRATES

CARBOHYDRATES – *think oats, potatoes, fruit, veg, beans, pulses, quinoa, rice*

KEY POINTS

- Carbs are your body's preferred source of energy and it is important to eat some quality slow-digesting carbs each day (see examples above)
- They won't make you gain weight unless you eat enough to push you over your calorie needs
- Carbs are less important for healthy hormones than protein and fat, so can be minimised to 1-2 servings per day to help reduce calories
- It's a good idea to eat carbs before and after exercise to fuel your body
- Natural, minimally processed carbs such as oats, potatoes, sweet potato, lentils, beans and pulses contain fibre, vitamins and minerals too
- If bread, pasta, sugar and wheat sit ok with your stomach and you feel fine after, they are fine to eat. Just be aware of portion sizes as the calories very easily add up

CARBOHYDRATES

Good carbohydrate sources include:

- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Oats
- ✓ Potatoes (sweet and white)
- ✓ Quinoa
- ✓ Chick peas
- ✓ Lentils
- ✓ Beans
- ✓ Fruit
- ✓ Rice (wholegrain is better if you like it)



Menopause can sometimes cause the digestive system to become more sensitive to foods containing wheat and gluten, so it's worth noting how you feel after eating bread and pasta. If you feel fine, they are ok to have, though it is still worth prioritising other options listed above as they contain more nutrients for the calories.

NUTRITION FOR HEALTH THROUGH MENOPAUSE

To sum up the best foods to focus on for optimum health and hormones:

PROTEIN - from lean meat, fish, beans, lentils, pulses and eggs.

VEGETABLES – ALL are brilliant, and variety is key. A mix of dark green veggies, and then different colour ones too, will ensure you get the full spectrum of vitamins and minerals you need, plus plenty of fibre.

HEALTHY FATS – from oily fish, avocado, olive oil, coconut oil, eggs, nuts and seeds.

BEANS / PULSES – for fibre to keep you full, slow-release carbohydrates to give you energy, and an extra boost of some essential vitamins and minerals

If these foods form a large chunk of your diet, you will likely feel SO much better, and experience far less problems or symptoms, than if they don't.

The following pages contain some more information on specific nutrients your body requires during menopause, the best foods to eat and how they can help.

HORMONE BOOSTERS – PHYTO-OESTROGENS

Phyto-oestrogens are chemicals that naturally occur plants, who's shape and structure is very similar to that of the body's own oestrogen.

As the body's natural oestrogen levels fluctuate and fall during menopause, phyto-oestrogens can bind to cells that still need it, calming the hormonal system down and potentially reducing symptoms such as hot flushes.

Food containing phyto-oestrogens include:

Most fruits
and vegetables
in particular:

Oranges
Broccoli
Carrots



As well as:

Soy
Beans
Pulses
Chickpeas
Flaxseed
Sesame seeds
Miso
Tempeh



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FOR STRONG BONES - CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D

Many people know that calcium is important for bone strength, and that bones become weaker and more brittle after menopause.

Eating enough calcium-rich foods is important, but what many people don't know is that calcium cannot be used to build bones without enough vitamin D to help transport it.

Calcium-rich foods include:

Kale
Broccoli
Watercress
Bok choy
Okra
Milk
Sardines
Yogurt
Kefir
Cheese

Vitamin D we get mostly from the sun (so it's worth taking a vitamin D3 supplement if you live in Britain..). It's also found in:

Salmon
Mackerel
Tuna
Beef liver
Egg yolks
Cheese



FOR ENERGY, HEALTH AND SLEEP - MAGNESIUM

Many of us have below optimum levels of magnesium.

It plays a vital role in almost every bodily process, and getting enough of it in the diet has been linked to reduced risk of Alzheimer's, diabetes and heart disease. It also appears to help some women with energy levels, sleep, and reduction in migraines.

You can find it in:

Spinach and other dark green veg

Avocado

Figs

Chard

Black beans

Yogurt

Almonds

Pumpkin seeds

Dark chocolate 😊



FOR HEART AND BRAIN HEALTH - OMEGA 3

Omega 3 is vital for heart and brain health, as well as assisting the body in absorbing fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

There is some evidence that it can help reduce hot flushes by essentially calming the circulatory system and reducing the excessive dilation of blood vessels.

It can be worth taking an omega 3 supplement if you don't eat oily fish at least twice a week.

Top food sources are:

- Salmon
- Sardines
- Mackerel
- Chia seeds
- Flaxseeds
- Walnuts



EFFECTS OF SUGAR

Another area to look at is sugar and refined carbohydrates. The body tends to become much more sensitive to sugar during menopause. Often foods that could be eaten with no problems before suddenly cause digestive issues, or a large rise in blood sugar levels that is followed by a 'sugar crash' and subsequent cravings for more sugar.

The drop in oestrogen that accompanies menopause also makes the body much more likely to store excess sugar calories in fat cells around the stomach.

So it is well worth limiting consumption of refined high sugar foods such as cakes, biscuits, sweets, and chocolate (above 70% dark chocolate is still a good option). You don't need to cut them completely, but it is worth making sure that what you have is worth the calories. Cutting down on biscuits and junk food snacks can allow you to save calories for something delicious and indulgent when you really want it.



Wheat, gluten and dairy can sometimes begin to cause digestive problems too (but for a lot of women they are still fine, so listening to your own body is key).

Usually potatoes, wholegrains, sourdough bread, and rice are still fine, just keep an eye on portion sizes and make sure you have enough protein and veg in your meal too.

TIPS TO FEEL AT YOUR BEST AND RESTORE BALANCE

- **NO MORE DIETS.** This is a crucial time to switch focus from trying to lose weight to supporting and nourishing your body. You absolutely can still lose weight if you need to, but be aware that fluctuating hormones will cause scale readings to fluctuate at times too. Removing the pressure and focusing on creating a healthy, active, joy-filled (rather than stress-full) lifestyle will be far more likely bring you better results long term.
- Eating little and often may help to keep blood sugar levels more stable, BUT listen to your body and pick frequency of eating that allows you to feel at your best
- Make time for a quality breakfast that includes protein
- Reduce processed foods containing sugar – save sugar for the occasional splurge that’s really worth it (like an amazing dessert every now and again) and aim to avoid it in grab and go snacks
- Aim for a serving of protein in each meal
- Good fats daily – oily fish, eggs, avocado, small amounts of olive oil/coconut oil/nuts
- Good fibre daily – vegetables, oats, beans, pulses, fruit
- Phytoestrogens for hormones and energy – fruit and veg in particular
- Stop drinking calories – lattes, smoothies, juices, alcohol all add up
- Lots of water, sleep, and acts of self-care – time to look after you
- Daily movement – walking, especially in nature whenever you can
- Lift weights (see next page)

RESISTANCE TRAINING

Many women are nervous about resistance training (lifting weights or doing exercises using our bodyweight) due to fear of gaining muscle, or not liking the idea of working out in a gym environment. However, as females, we don't have the testosterone levels required to build big muscles – it will simply bring all the fantastic benefits listed below.

There are so many benefits that is well worth exploring your options – hiring a personal trainer, getting a program at your gym, joining a class, or even doing home workouts. Anything you are happy to do can make a huge difference to your body over the years to come.

Benefits of resistance training:

- Helps keep hold of muscle as we age
- Can strengthen and tone the whole body
- Increases bone density
- Reduces risk of falls and injury
- Helps protect joints
- Helps protect heart and brain health
- Reduces stress hormones
- Boosts confidence



WALKING AND OTHER EXERCISE

Menopausal women who take regular exercise tend to have a better quality of life, fewer symptoms such as hot flushes, insomnia, anxiety and depression, and better memory and concentration.

Exercise reduces stress and causes your body to produce endorphins, which boost mental and hormonal health.

There are huge benefits to getting out in nature, breathing fresh air, and connecting with the world around you. Nature walks are highly recommended! But don't forget, every little helps – parking further away, walking up the stairs instead of taking the lift or escalator, and just generally making an effort to move around more can all add up to make a difference.

Any exercise that you enjoy is good – how about trying out a new class or challenging yourself with something you haven't done before? This can be a great way to have fun, boost your confidence and make new friends.

From a bone-density perspective, it's especially helpful to do activities that create impact for your bones to absorb – hiking, interval running, dance classes, skipping, resistance training and boxercise classes are all examples of this. Swimming and cycling are two-low impact activities that won't improve bone density, but they are still brilliant for cardiovascular health. So if you like them, keep doing them, just make sure to incorporate a high impact activity into your week too.

For heart health, doing something that makes you a bit sweaty and out of breath for at least 15 minutes 3 times a week, and hitting an average of 10,000 steps per day, is a great target to aim for.

SELF CARE

I've left this as the last page, but the effects of it are huge. This is a time in your life when your body really needs you! Planning self care into your week and doing regular acts of kindness for yourself can make a massive impact on your health, energy, sense of well-being and general enjoyment of life.

What would improve things for you and help you feel at your best?

Here are a few ideas:

- Planning some 'me-time' into each week
- Doing nice things for yourself often – getting nails done, buying flowers, having a massage, luxurious baths etc
- Exercising in ways you enjoy
- Making time to read
- Daily walks for fresh air and quiet time
- Yoga and / or meditation
- Having switch-off times from technology and social media
- Practicing mindful eating (paying attention to each mouthful, eating slowly and stopping when satisfied)
- Getting out in nature



Self care, healthy foods, lots of water, sleep, and regular exercise all come together to form the foundations of optimal mental and physical health through menopause and beyond. None of these need to be perfect, just keep working on areas you know you can improve. Be kind to yourself, give your body lots of support, know that tough times will improve as hormones settle down, and remember that lots of good things are still to come.

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If you have any questions or feedback, please get in touch. I am more than happy to help in any way I can. Here's how you can contact me, or keep up to date with my work:

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