
Healthy Eating Guidelines for Menopause

Menopause is part of the natural aging process of a woman's body. It can affect women differently. The general stages are:

- Perimenopause - the time leading up to menopause when your estrogen levels start to change. This is the time menopausal signs and symptoms appear, including hot flashes, night sweats, mood changes and trouble sleeping, even though you still menstruate. It can last several years.
- Menopause - the transition that happens in perimenopause up to your last menses (period). It can last for a number of years.
- Postmenopause - the time after your last menstrual period.

Many women look for treatment in the form of medication, supplements and dietary changes to deal with the hormonal changes and symptoms of menopause. You may notice that you are more emotional and have body changes such as a loss of muscle mass and a shift of where fat is located around your body during perimenopause and menopause. It is common to have some bone density loss during the first five years after menopause.

This fact sheet provides tips about combining eating well and being active to help you maintain your health as your body changes with menopause.



Steps you can take

Eat a healthy, balanced diet that includes vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein foods.

This will help you to meet your nutrition needs, keep your energy levels up and help you feel your best. Use your plate as a guide:

- Fill half of your plate with a variety of vegetables and fruits. They are a great source of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
- Fill a quarter of your plate with whole grains such as oats, quinoa, barley, brown or wild rice, and whole grain bread and pasta.
- Fill a quarter of your plate with protein foods such as beans, peas and lentils, fish and seafood, tofu, nuts, seeds and their butters, eggs, lean meat, poultry, milk, fortified soy beverage and yogurt.

Choose foods with healthy fats.

After menopause, your risk of heart disease increases.

- Replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats
 - Saturated fats are found in full fat milk and dairy products such as cream and cheese, butter, lard, shortening, palm, palm kernel and coconut oils, fatty meat and poultry skin.
 - Unsaturated fat are found in nuts, peanuts, avocados, non-hydrogenated margarines, most plant oils such as olive, canola, peanut, sunflower and safflower, seeds, such as flax, chia and hemp, oily fish such as herring, salmon, mackerel and trout, and whole grains.

Limit highly processed foods.

These foods and drinks are high in added sugar, sodium or saturated fat. They are often low in the nutrients that help keep us healthy. If you eat these foods, eat them less often or in small amounts. Highly processed foods can include:

- sugary drinks such as pop, soda, sweetened coffee and tea beverages, lemonade and fruit drinks
- potato chips and other snack foods
- instant noodles and packaged soups
- deep fried foods
- sweetened cereals, candy and ice cream
- baked goods such as pie, cake, donuts and cookies
- processed meat, such as sausages, deli meats and bacon
- frozen entrees, such as pizza, lasagna and appetizers.

Aim to meet your nutrient needs for calcium and vitamin D for healthy bones and to prevent bone loss that can happen after menopause.

- Calcium is one of the building blocks of strong bones and your body needs vitamin D to help absorb calcium.
- Good food sources of calcium include dairy products including milk, yogurt and lower fat cheese, unsweetened fortified soy beverage, tofu with added calcium and canned fish with the bones.

- Good food sources of vitamin D include milk, unsweetened fortified soy beverages, eggs and fatty fish such as salmon and trout. Health Canada also recommends that all adults over 50 years of age take a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 IU.
- Talk to your doctor or a registered dietitian about taking a supplement if you do not eat these foods every day.

Be physically active every day.

Choose activities you enjoy doing and aim to be active for at least 150 minutes per week in bouts of 10 minutes or more. Check with your health care provider or a qualified exercise professional to see what types and amounts of activities are best for you.

Other Considerations

Soy and flax

Soy and flax both contain phytoestrogens, which are estrogen-like compounds found in plants.

Women may try soy and flax in food or pill form to help relieve the symptoms of menopause. However, phytoestrogen supplements have been shown to be ineffective at decreasing how often or how bad hot flashes are and they are unlikely to improve overall menopausal symptoms.

Even though soy and flax seeds may not help to reduce menopausal symptoms, they are healthy foods. You may still want to include them in your diet. If you have had breast cancer, talk to your doctor or registered dietitian before adding soy or flax foods to your diet.



Additional Resources

- Canada's Food Guide <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- Canada's Physical Activity Tips for Adults <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/physical-activity-tips-adults-18-64-years.html>

- Food Sources of Vitamin D
[www.pennutrition.com/
viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMbqWAI=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMbqWAI=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
- Food Sources of Calcium
[www.pennutrition.com/
viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMfrUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==)

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