



## Cardiovascular Changes During Peri/Post Menopause:

During peri/post menopause, women undergo hormonal changes that affect their cardiovascular health. Prior to menopause, women have a lower risk of cardiovascular events compared to age-matched men, largely attributed to the protective effects of estrogen.

After menopause, the risk of heart disease and stroke increases due to declining estrogen levels. Changes can occur in blood vessels and cholesterol levels may also be altered, leading to a decrease in high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol.

Vasomotor symptoms (VMS), such as hot flashes and night sweats, are common during menopause. The severity of VMS is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, osteoporosis, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in Canadian women. Risk factors for CVD include smoking, diabetes, stress, hypertension, high cholesterol, and obesity. Female-specific risk factors include early age of menarche, irregular menstrual cycles, use of oral contraceptives, hypertensive issues during pregnancy, VMS during menopause, and premature menopause.



**Heart Rate Variability (HRV)** is a measure of the variation in time between each heartbeat, reflecting the body's ability to adapt to stimuli. High HRV may signal better cardiovascular fitness and stress resilience. Other variables that may push us into "fight or flight" are persistent stress, poor sleep and unhealthy diets.

### **How can menopausal women lower their risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD):**

- Improve HRV: Use trackers like Whoop, Aura Ring, or Garmin products to monitor HRV levels.
- Exercise: Engage in aerobic exercise for at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week and include strength training at least two times per week.
- Improve diet and lifestyle choices.
- Manage stress effectively.
- Enhance sleep quality.
- Regularly monitor blood pressure.
- Schedule regular blood work to monitor lipid profile and diabetes.

We would encourage all women to bring their whole medical support team together. Physiotherapists can work alongside Family Doctors and Specialists, and other allied health to give women tools to prevent, identify risk factors and manage CVD.

## **Contact Information**



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