



## Nutrition for Menopause

Women in midlife face a range of health challenges, including unwanted weight gain, loss of lean body mass, and concerns about bone health. These issues are often attributed to hormonal changes, particularly the decline of estrogen during perimenopause and menopause. This hormonal shift can lead to increased storage of visceral fat (internal fat around mid-section) and changes in insulin sensitivity, raising the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The good news is that many of these health risks can be mitigated with an emphasis on Nutrition and a healthy relationship with food.

Here are a few areas you can explore:

- **Mindful Eating:** Practice listening to your body cues for hunger and fullness. Try eating slowly, savouring your food and becoming aware of emotions during eating. This type of intuitive eating has been shown to improve body satisfaction, reduce disordered eating and help achieve a healthy weight.
- **Nutrient intake:** Nutrient needs fluctuate during menopause. It is important to monitor: Iron and B12 to match your blood losses if you are still menstruating. Calcium and Vitamin D are also key to maintain healthy bones. Check with your Dietitian or Doctor if you have questions about your nutrient needs.

- **Calorie Needs:** Calorie needs tend to reduce as we age and become less active. Rather than restricting calories, use your hunger as a guide. Try filling half your plate with vegetables and fruits to reduce calories and add nutrients.
- **Improved Digestion:** Eat at regular intervals during the day. Increase fibre by choosing whole grains like oats, quinoa, barley and whole grain cereals and breads. Keep a food diary if you are experiencing gastrointestinal upset and look for the food combinations that work the best for you.
- **Protein needs:** increase during menopause as muscle and bone mass tend to decline. Research suggests that about 20 to 30 grams of protein per meal is needed to stimulate muscle building. Choose plant-based proteins like legumes, beans, nuts and seeds more often and lean meats, fish, eggs and lower-fat dairy.
- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Choose healthy fats like avocado, olive oil, vegetable oil and the fat found in nuts and seeds and fatty fish like salmon and trout. Limit highly processed foods with added sugar and salt, like fast foods, desserts, commercial baked goods, candy, and ice cream.

#### References:

1. <https://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/030314p30.shtml>
2. <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Seniors-nutrition/What-to-Eat-During-and-After-Menopause.aspx>
3. <https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/healthful-habits/eat-right-for-life>

Written by Heidi Smith, Registered Dietitian

## Contact Information



gwha.ca



eramosaphysio.com

