

NOURISHING YOURSELF THROUGH MENOPAUSE

Evidence-based nutrition and healthy lifestyle
tips to support your well-being



INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a time of significant change that can affect many aspects of health, including bones and muscles, heart and metabolic health, and emotional well-being. Healthy nutrition and lifestyle habits can help support a healthier transition and improve quality of life during and beyond menopause.

This booklet covers four key areas: nutrition and eating behaviours, physical activity, other lifestyle habits, and body image. Each section provides evidence-based practical guidance to support your health and well-being through the menopausal transition.



NUTRITION AND EATING BEHAVIOURS



Key principles of a healthy diet

Eat a variety of whole foods

- **Vegetables and fruits: fill half your plate** – fresh, frozen, or canned all count. Aim for a range of colours.
- **Whole grains: oats, brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat bread and pasta, barley** – choose these over refined grains (white bread, baked goods, etc.) most of the time.
- **Protein foods:** fish, poultry, eggs, lean meats, legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans), tofu, tempeh, and dairy.
- **Healthy fats:** nuts, seeds, avocado, olive oil, and fatty fish (ex., salmon, mackerel, sardines) for omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Legumes:** lentils, chickpeas, black beans, edamame – rich in both protein and fibre, and especially valuable for heart and gut health.
- **Aim for variety across and within each food group. No single food or supplement can replace the benefits of a diverse, whole-food diet.**

Everything in moderation

- **No single food or food group needs to be eliminated.** Restricting entire categories of food is not recommended and can make it harder to reach dietary requirements.
- **A balanced, varied diet leaves room for the foods you enjoy.** Enjoyment is part of good nutrition.
- **Some foods can be detrimental to your health if consumed regularly or in excess.** Choose these less often: red meat, ultra-processed foods, high-sodium foods, sweetened beverages, and saturated fats.
- Remember: **not every day needs to be perfect. A good rule of thumb is the 80/20 approach:** prioritize nourishing food choices about 80% of the time and leave room for flexibility and enjoyment the other 20%. Overall patterns matter more than individual choices.

Inclusion | Moderation | Variety



Healthy eating through menopause

Include protein at every meal

- Protein becomes particularly important during menopause to protect muscle mass, bone strength, physical function, and immune health.
- How much? **Aim for approximately 1.0–1.2 grams of protein per kilogram of your body weight** per day. For a woman weighing 70 kg (154 lbs), that is roughly 70–84 g of protein per day.
- **Good sources:** eggs, fish, seafood, poultry, lean meats, legumes, tofu, tempeh, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, and nuts.
- **Aim to include a source of protein at every meal and snack**, spreading intake throughout the day supports your satiety levels and sets you up to meet your protein needs. A good number to aim for is 20–30 g of protein per meal.

How to know the amount of protein and fibre in your food?

- Find the total grams per serving size of protein or fibre on any food labels.
- If there are no food labels, the protein content of food is widely available online, too!
- Note that a serving size does not necessarily mean that's the portion you need to eat.

Prioritize fibre

- **A fibre-rich diet supports digestion and gut health**, which plays a role in hormone regulation, bone health, and mood during menopause.
- **Fibre also plays a key role in heart health and metabolic health.** Higher fibre intake is associated with lower LDL cholesterol, improved blood sugar regulation, and reduced cardiovascular risk.
- **Aim for at least 25 grams of fibre per day.** Good sources include vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds. For reference: 1 cup of cooked lentils provides about 16 g; 1 medium pear provides about 5 g; ½ cup of oats provides about 4 g.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 10 oz.	
Serving Per Container 5	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 200	Calories From Fat 200
% Daily value*	
Total Fat 10 g	35%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	11%
Trans Fat 0.0 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	1%
Sodium 210 mg	15%
Total Carbohydrate 15 g	3%
Dietary Fiber 2 g	3%
Sugars 3 g	
Protein 30 g	



Consult the next page for a list of examples of high protein and high fibre foods

PUTTING IT INTO CONTEXT

Examples of Protein-Rich Foods

Food	Portion size	Approximate protein
Chicken breast, cooked	3 oz / 85 g	26 g
Salmon, cooked	3 oz / 85 g	22 g
Shrimp, cooked	3 oz / 85 g	20 g
Canned tuna, drained	3 oz / 85 g	20-22 g
Tofu, firm	½ cup / 125 ml	10 g
Tempeh	3 oz / 85 g	16 g
Eggs	2 large eggs	12-14 g
Greek yogurt	¾ cup / 185 ml	17 g
Cottage cheese	½ cup / 125 ml	14 g
Almonds	¼ cup / 60 ml	6 g

Examples of Fibre-Rich Foods

Food	Portion size	Approximate fibre
Lentils, cooked	1 cup / 250 ml	16 g
Black beans, cooked	½ cup / 125 ml	7-8 g
Chickpeas, cooked	½ cup / 125 ml	6 g
Edamame, cooked	½ cup / 125 ml	4 g
Brussel sprouts, cooked	1 cup / 250 ml	6g
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup / 250 ml	5 g
Chia seeds	2 tbsp / 30 ml	8-10 g
Oats	½ cup / 125 ml dry	4 g
Quinoa, cooked	1 cup / 250 ml	5 g
Whole grain bread	1 slice	2-4 g
Raspberries	1 cup / 250 ml	8 g
Kiwi	2 medium	4 g

Healthy eating through menopause

Nutrients that support your bones

Calcium

- **Calcium is best absorbed from food.** Women aged 50+ should consume 1200 mg daily.
- **Rich sources include:** dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese), fortified plant-based beverages (soy, oat, almond), canned salmon or sardines (with bones), tofu made with calcium sulphate, edamame, almonds, broccoli, bok choy, and kale.
- **Calcium supplements are no longer routinely recommended for midlife women.** Excess calcium from supplements is associated with a higher risk of kidney stones and heart problems. Food sources are preferred whenever possible. Consult your doctor or dietitian before starting a calcium supplement.

Vitamin D

- **Vitamin D is harder to get through food alone.** The best dietary sources include: fatty fish (salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines), egg yolks, fortified milk and plant-based beverages, and fortified orange juice. However, these foods typically provide only a fraction of daily needs.
- **A daily supplement of 400 IU (international units) daily for Canadian adults is broadly recommended,** in addition to vitamin D-rich foods, to help meet the recommended dietary allowance (600 IU/day for ages 51 to 70).
- **Important:** vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin. It is best absorbed when consumed alongside a meal or snack that contains some fat (e.g., a drizzle of olive oil, avocado, nuts, or cheese).

Supplements

- **Vitamin D is the only nutritional supplement that is broadly recommended for most Canadian women above 50 years old.**
- Most herbal supplements marketed for hot flashes (black cohosh, dong quai, evening primrose oil, etc.) have not been shown to work in rigorous clinical trials.
- **"Natural" or "herbal" does not mean safe or effective.**
- If you are wondering if you should take a specific supplement during menopause, always discuss with your doctor or nurse practitioner first.

Did you know?



Some women notice that spicy foods, caffeine, or alcohol can trigger or worsen hot flashes, but this varies from person to person. If you notice a connection, you can try reducing that food to see if it helps. There is no need to avoid these foods unless they are a personal trigger for you.



Your relationship with food matters too

Embrace a mindful approach to eating

- **Listen to your body's cues.** Eat when you are physically hungry, stop when you are comfortably satisfied, and notice how different foods make you feel.
- **Pay attention to how you eat, not just what you eat.** Eating slowly, minimizing distractions, and savouring your food can help you better recognize hunger and fullness, while making meals more satisfying.
- **Regular meals, with snacks as needed,** help support your energy levels, muscle health, and mood. Try to avoid grazing or prolonged periods of fasting.
- **Cook at home when you can.** Home-cooked meals can improve dietary quality while helping you reconnect with the enjoyment of preparing and sharing food.
- **Remember that eating is about more than nutrition.** Food also brings pleasure, culture, comfort, and opportunities to connect with others.
- **The best changes for your health are the ones you are able to sustain long-term.** Take it one step at a time, prioritizing the inclusion of whole foods over restriction.

Watch out for diet culture

- Many diets, detoxes, and wellness trends targeting menopausal women lack scientific evidence.
- **Restrictive diets and eating approaches may lead to short-term weight loss, but long-term results and safety are not supported by evidence.**
- Be skeptical of products or programs promising rapid weight loss or hormonal "rebalancing."

You are not alone

- Midlife is a time when some women notice changes in their appetite, eating habits, or relationship with food.
- Emotional eating, restrictive eating, and preoccupation with food or weight are common in women during and after menopause and can lead to poor mental and physical wellbeing.

When to seek support

If you find yourself skipping meals frequently, feeling out of control around food, or spending a lot of mental energy on food and weight, consider speaking with a registered dietitian for personalized nutrition support. If needed, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner for a referral.



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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Move for Strength, Vitality, and Longevity

Physical activity is one of the most powerful tools available to support your health –for your bones, heart, muscles, mood, sleep, and independence. The goal is to move in ways that build lasting strength and vitality, at any body size.

Building and maintaining strength is more important than ever

- During menopause, **estrogen decline reduces the hormonal signals that help maintain muscle.** Strength training directly compensates for this by stimulating muscle growth through movement.
- **Resistance training is the most effective way to preserve lean mass, protect bone density, and reduce fall and fracture risk as you age.**
- **You do not need a gym** – body weight exercises, resistance bands, and home workouts all count.
- Strength training supports your independence: the ability to carry groceries, climb stairs, and stay active for decades to come.
- For best results, pair resistance training with adequate protein intake (see Nutrition section).

Add aerobic movement you enjoy

- **Aim for at least 150 minutes per week** (about 20 minutes/day) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., brisk walking, cycling, swimming, dancing).
- Even small amounts of movement make a meaningful difference and can lead to lower risk of heart disease and stroke, reduced hot flash burden, and better sleep.



Move for your mind too

- Regular physical activity **can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety during the menopausal transition.**
- Mind-body practices like yoga, Tai Chi, and Qigong can reduce stress, improve sleep quality, and support overall well-being.
- **Find activities that bring you joy, and that fit your life** – consistency matters more than intensity.

LIFESTYLE HABITS

Beyond food and exercise, several everyday habits play a meaningful role in how you feel during the menopausal transition. Sleep, stress, alcohol, and smoking can all affect your symptoms, long-term health, and quality of life.

Prioritize sleep

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- Sleep disturbances are among the most common and disruptive symptoms of menopause.
 - **Practical sleep hygiene tips:** keep a consistent sleep and wake time, avoid caffeine after noon, limit alcohol in the evening, and keep your bedroom cool and dark.
 - **Try to exercise earlier in the day** if you notice that vigorous activity close to bedtime is affecting your ability to fall asleep.

Manage Stress

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- Stress can worsen hot flashes, disrupt sleep, and increase the risk of depression and anxiety during the menopausal transition.
 - **Evidence-based stress management options include:** cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, and social connection.
 - **Protecting time for rest, relationships, and activities you enjoy is not a luxury; it is part of your health.**

Alcohol: Less is better

- **There is no completely safe level of alcohol consumption.** Canada's current guidance ([CCSA, 2023](#)) identifies **2 or fewer standard drinks per week** as the lower-risk threshold, but it is important to know that even this level carries some health risk. **The evidence is clear: the less alcohol consumed, the better for overall health.**
- **Alcohol is a known carcinogen.** As alcohol consumption increases, so does the risk of seven types of cancer, along with many other health conditions.
- **This is especially important after menopause.** Breast cancer risk increases after menopause due to hormonal and age-related changes, making it particularly important to consider alcohol as a modifiable risk factor.

Quit smoking, or get support to

- Smoking is associated with earlier menopause onset and more severe hot flashes.
- Tobacco also compounds the bone and heart health risks that are already elevated during the menopausal transition.
- **Quitting smoking at any age has meaningful health benefits.** Free cessation support is available through Health Canada and provincial programs.

If you are concerned about your sleep, stress levels, alcohol use, substance use, or smoking habits, consider speaking with a registered dietitian for personalized nutrition support. If needed, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner for a referral.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF



Body changes during
menopause are normal,
and complex

- Hormonal changes can shift where your body stores fat, affect your skin, hair, and sleep, and change how your body feels day to day.
- **These changes are driven by biology, not by personal failure.**
- While changes in body weight are common during menopause, optimizing your nutrition and lifestyle habits can help you maintain a healthy weight or minimize weight gain.
- **Remember that healthy eating and lifestyle habits benefit your health and well-being, regardless of whether or not they change body weight.**

Cultivate a positive
relationship with your
body

- **Body appreciation** – noticing and valuing what your body can do– is a stronger predictor of well-being than pursuing a specific body size or shape.
- **Change is a natural part of aging.** Caring for your body means supporting it through this transition, not expecting it to stay the same forever.
- Resist diet culture messaging that tells you your body needs to be “fixed.” **You deserve nourishment and care as you are, right now.**
- If you have concerns about body or weight changes during menopause, don’t hesitate to speak with your doctor or a registered dietitian for personalized support and guidance.



MOVING FORWARD

Menopause is a natural life transition, and it can also be an important turning point for women's health. During this stage, your body may change in new and sometimes unexpected ways.

The nutrition and lifestyle habits shared in this booklet are about supporting your overall well-being through nourishment, movement, rest, self-compassion, and evidence-based care. **Small, realistic changes can make a meaningful difference for your bones, muscles, heart, mood, energy, and quality of life during menopause and beyond.**

You do not have to navigate this transition alone. If you have questions about your nutrition, body changes, symptoms, or relationship with food, consider reaching out to a qualified healthcare provider for personalized support.

Finding a dietitian:

For personalized nutrition advice and practical guidance, consider speaking with a registered dietitian. In Canada, dietitians are regulated health professionals and nutrition and food experts. Each province has a public registry where you can verify a dietitian's licence to practise. You can also use Dietitians of Canada's "Find a Dietitian" directory to search by location, language, or health concern.

[Dietitians of Canada](#)

A French version of this booklet is available.

Visit our [website](#) for more information.



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