A Lifestyle Medicine Approach to Menopause



Menopause is a natural stage of life that marks the end of monthly periods and fertility. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55, but the timing can vary from person to person.

During this time, changing hormone levels can cause symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats, mood changes, sleep problems and vaginal dryness. Some simple lifestyle changes may help ease symptoms and support overall wellbeing, as detailed below.

Make healthy food choices



Food choices can help support the body through menopause and may ease some symptoms. Aim for a balanced diet that includes plenty of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, oily fish and low-fat dairy or fortified alternatives. [1]

Calcium-rich foods, sources of vitamin D and foods containing healthy fats can support bone and heart health. Some people also find that reducing caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods and very sugary foods helps manage hot flushes, sleep problems and mood changes.

Good quality sleep is key

Good-quality sleep can help women through menopause by supporting mood, energy, memory and stress levels, as well as helping the body cope better with hot flushes and night sweats. Better sleep can also improve concentration and overall wellbeing.[2]

To improve sleep during menopause, try keeping a regular bedtime, making your room cool and dark, avoiding caffeine, alcohol and heavy meals late in the evening, and building a relaxing wind-down routine before bed.

Reduce smoking and drinking



Nicotine, vaping and alcohol can make menopause symptoms harder to manage. Nicotine may worsen hot flushes and affect sleep, while alcohol can trigger hot flushes, disturb sleep and affect mood.[3]

Reducing or stopping these substances can help improve sleep, support calmer moods, reduce symptom triggers and protect long-term health.

References:

1. Liu YC, Guo ZQ. Dietary interventions and nutritional strategies for menopausal health: a mini review. Front Nutr. 2025 Dec
2. Kravitz HM, Kazlauskaite R, Joffe H. Sleep, Health, and Metabolism in Midlife Women and Menopause: Food for Thought. Obstet Gynecol Clin North Am. 2018 Dec
3. Kim H et al. Associations Between Smoking, Alcohol Consumption, Physical Activity and Depression in Middle-Aged Premenopausal and Postmenopausal Women. Front Psychiatry. 2021 Dec

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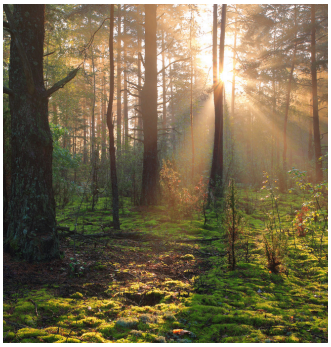
Movement matters



Regular exercise can play an important role in living well with menopause. It may help reduce the severity of symptoms such as hot flushes, sleep problems, low mood and joint stiffness, while also supporting energy levels, strength and heart health.[4]

Aim to include a mix of aerobic activity, such as brisk walking or cycling, and strength-based exercise if you can. Even small amounts of movement spread throughout the day can make a positive difference to your overall wellbeing.

Manage stress



Managing stress can help ease menopause symptoms by reducing triggers for hot flushes, improving sleep and supporting mood and concentration. When stress is high, symptoms can feel more intense, so calming routines may make day-to-day life feel more manageable.[5]

Helpful strategies include deep breathing, mindfulness, gentle movement, time in nature and talking to someone you trust. Building small stress-management habits into your routine can support both your symptoms and your overall wellbeing.

Get support

Maintaining healthy relationships and staying socially connected can support emotional wellbeing during menopause. Having people to talk to may reduce feelings of isolation, lift mood and make it easier to cope with changes such as sleep problems, hot flushes or low energy.[6]



Spending time with friends, family, support groups or community activities can also provide reassurance, encouragement and a sense of connection. Social support can make this stage of life feel easier to manage.

References:

4. Why exercise is essential during menopause. University of Rochester Medicine.
5. Xu H, Liu J, Li P, Liang Y. Effects of mind-body exercise on perimenopausal and postmenopausal women: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Menopause. 2024 May
6. Naworska B, Brzęk A, Bąk-Sosnowska M. The Relationship between Health Status and Social Activity of Perimenopausal and Postmenopausal Women (Health Status and Social Relationships in Menopause). Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2020 Nov

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