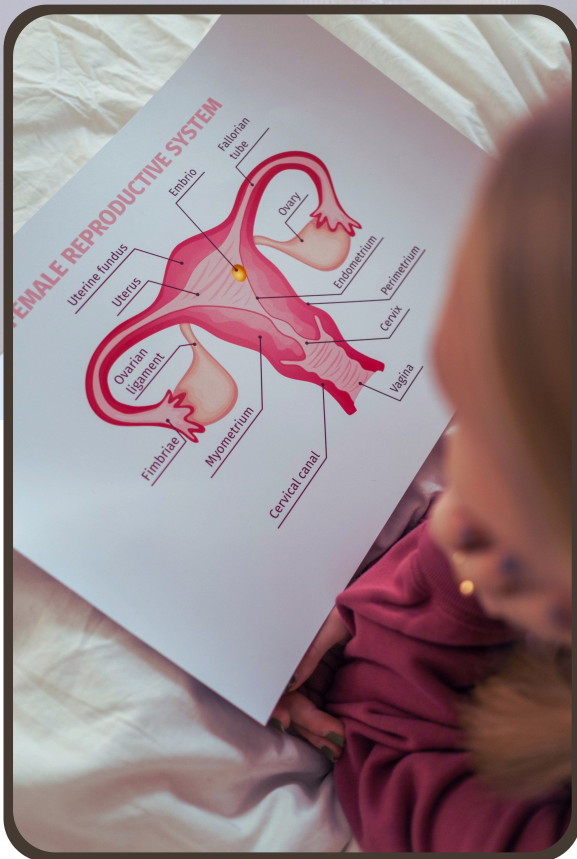


Find your Balance

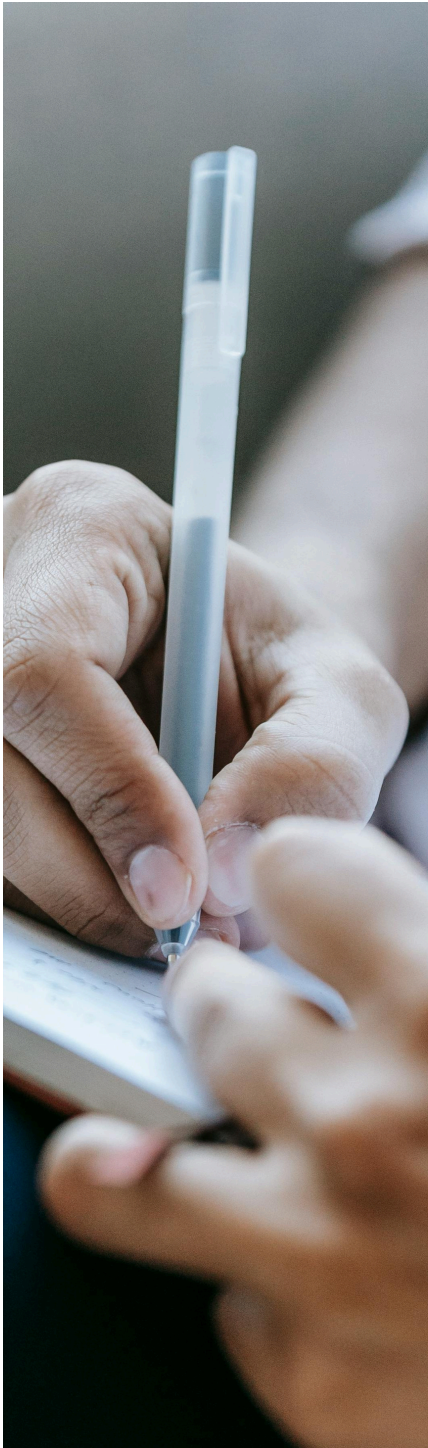
HARMONY THROUGH MENOPAUSE



A step-by-step guide
to Menopause and what you
can do about it



What we will cover to help you navigate this change with grace and confidence



1. The Basics of menopause
 - Intro
 - A text book cycle
 - Hormone basics
2. What happens in the Body
 - Symptoms
 - What is changing
3. Nutrition and Supplements
 - How does this effect it?
 - What can I take?
 - Weight
4. Movement
 - Benefits
 - What you can do

1. The Basics of Menopause

The definition of Menopause is the ceasing of menstruation. So, technically we only experience menopause for one day, the last day of our very last period. The symptoms that we experience, however, happen during peri-menopause which can be the eight or so years leading up to menopause! So with the average age of menopause being 51, we can start experiencing peri-menopause at 43 or younger!



important tip

Try not stress about it! Stress takes a toll on your body and not only impairs reproduction hormones but also reduces the nutrients you need to maintain day to day function.



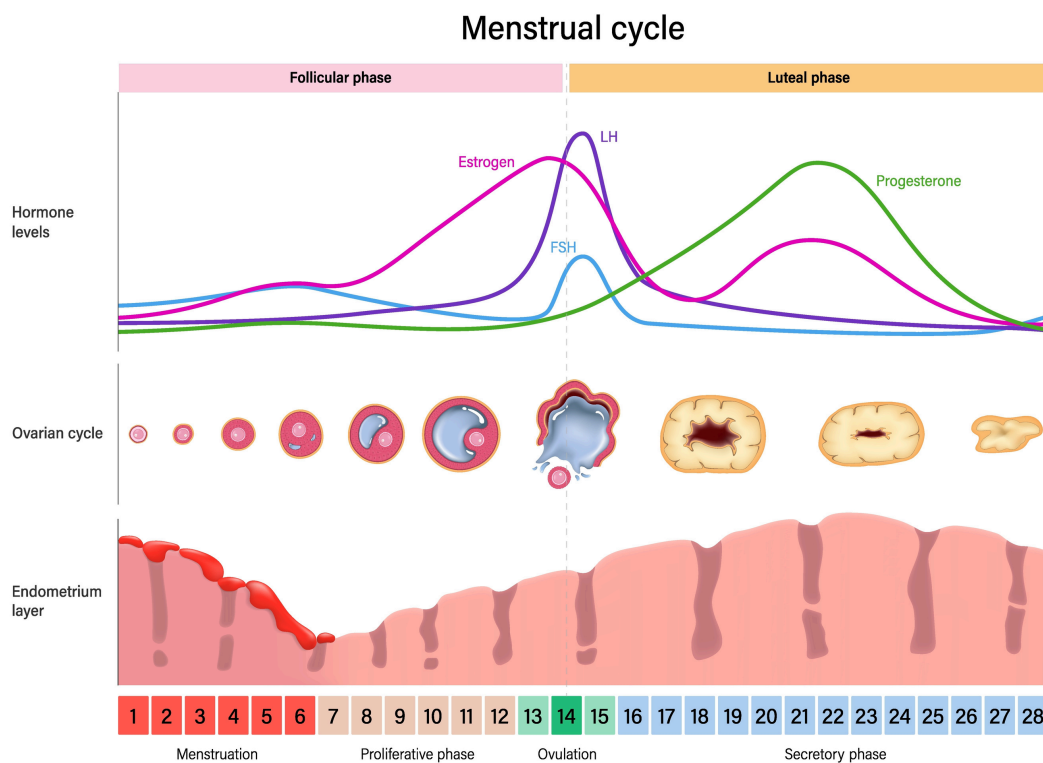
An online survey found that more than 90% of women had never been taught about perimenopause at school, and more than 60% did not feel informed at all about the perimenopause. So if your one of those women lets get into what the female body is designed to do and then later what changes as we age.

In the beginning...woman are born with millions of follicles (eggs) in their ovaries. Once menstruation starts it is the cycle of releasing eggs, via follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and lutinizing hormone (LH), which stimulates the response of estrogen and progesterone in the body preparing it for pregnancy. As we age these hormones reduce and this reduction to our hormone levels can lead to peri-menopause symptoms. We will cover why they reduce later on.

A Natural Cycle

The function of hormones, is a delicate equilibrium

Ah, the classic textbook menstrual cycle—28 days, ovulation on day 14, like clockwork, right? Well, not always! Real-life cycles can be more like jazz: some are short and sweet, around 21 days, while others take their time, up to 35 days.



Ovulation doesn't always RSVP for day 14 either—it might sneak in early or arrive fashionably late. Stress, hormones, age, and lifestyle can all shake things up, making every cycle as unique as its owner. So, while textbooks give us the basics, your body might have its own playlist! So if chaos is your normal then spotting perimenopause by tracking your cycle won't be the way you know if you've joined the perimenopause/menopause team. However, if you happen to be lucky enough to have a relatively regular cycle then tracking when it becomes irregular will tell you if you've made it.

Cycle Recap

Day 1-6: Period happens (estrogen and progesterone are low)

Day 7-13: Estrogen increases, progesterone is low

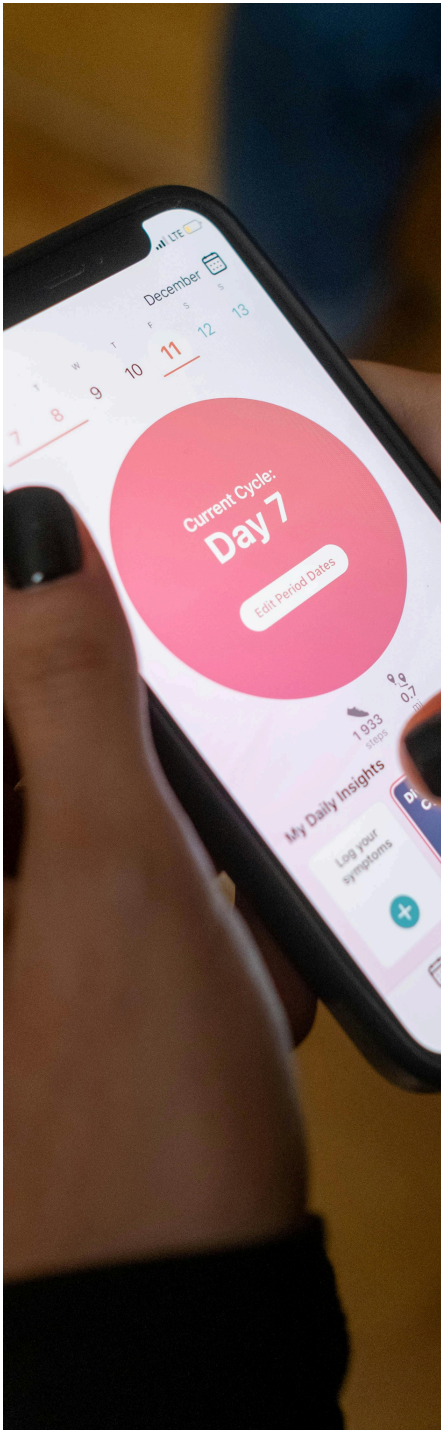
Day 14: Estrogen spikes to stimulate ovulation

Day 15: Ovulation occurs and progesterone increases

Day 16-20: Progesterone increases and estrogen slowly decreases

Day 21: Highest level of progesterone

Day 22-28: Both hormones decline if no conception and your period ensues.



Hormone Basics

Pregnenolone is the mother hormone and it is a required building block for all the other hormones. It is produced from cholesterol in the brain, adrenal glands and ovaries. It helps to regulate energy, reduces fatigue, improves immunity, enhances learning and memory, and helps with repair of trauma or injuries. It has natural anti-inflammatory properties which work to degrade proteins in the signalling system for inflammation and it can also inhibit the secretion of pro-inflammatory signalling molecules.

Hormones function like a family. The brain is dad, the mom is pregnenolone, estrogen and progesterone are the older sisters and cortisol and testosterone are the youngest siblings.

Estrogen is like the wise older sister of the hormone family, keeping the others in check and bringing out our nurturing, caring side. Known as the most “feminine” hormone, it encourages the classic nest-building instincts and even boosts our tolerance levels. While primarily produced in the ovaries, small amounts of estrogen also come from the adrenal glands and fat cells. But estrogen’s influence isn’t limited to the reproductive system—it’s a multitasker! It impacts the urinary tract, heart, blood vessels, bones, breasts, skin, hair, and mucus membranes (eyes, nose, mouth, and vagina), as well as pelvic muscles, fat tissue, and the brain. Often called the “caring” hormone, estrogen is a key player in nurturing both our bodies and our minds and helps to regulate the other hormones.

Progesterone is the quiet, calming second sister in the hormone family, always trying to keep the peace. She promotes relaxation and well-being, but here's the catch—she's also a favorite of cortisol a younger sister known as the stress hormone. More on that later! Progesterone is produced in the adrenal glands, ovaries, and during pregnancy in the placenta. Her main job is to thicken the uterine lining and support pregnancy. Beyond that, she's a brain health booster, anxiety reducer, sleep enhancer, bone builder, and even a natural hair-loss inhibitor—when cortisol isn't hogging her energy, that is.

Cortisol is the little sister in the hormone family who always needs watching. Think of that sibling who gets attention by jumping out from behind doors to scare you senseless! As our stress hormone, cortisol is produced in the adrenal glands and springs into action whenever stress levels rise, triggering our fight-or-flight mode. High cortisol tells the body to store energy in fat cells, preparing us to face perceived or actual danger. But when cortisol gets out of balance, it can throw off your metabolism, cause weight gain, and mood at any stage of life!

Testosterone is the youngest sibling in the hormone family—the quiet troublemaker who might just draw on the walls if left unsupervised! Produced in small amounts in women by the ovaries and adrenal glands, testosterone plays a crucial role in libido, muscle strength, and bone repair. It also supports energy levels, mood regulation, and overall vitality, making it an essential player in women's health despite often being overshadowed by its hormonal siblings.

Hormone Family Recap

- ✓ **Brain:** The Dad - the ultimate regulator, keeping everyone in line.
- ✓ **Pregnenolone:** The Mom - the creator and overseer, balancing the family dynamic.
- ✓ **Estrogen:** The Caring Older Sister - nurturing, organized, helps to keep the others balanced.
- ✓ **Progesterone:** The Chill Older Sister - calm, soothing, and the peacekeeper of the group.
- ✓ **Cortisol:** The Crazy Little Sister - unpredictable, demanding attention, and always stirring up drama when not watched.
- ✓ **Testosterone:** The Mischievous Youngest Brother - playful, daring, and always up to something!

The hormone family works together to keep our bodies in balance, with each member playing a unique role. Pregnenolone, the "mother hormone," is the building block for all others. Estrogen, the wise older sister, nurtures and regulates the family, impacting everything from the reproductive system to the heart, skin, and brain. Progesterone, the calming sister, promotes relaxation, supports pregnancy, and enhances sleep and bone health, though cortisol, the "crazy little sister," often steals her energy during stress. Cortisol manages our fight-or-flight response but can disrupt metabolism and mood when unchecked. Finally, testosterone, the mischievous youngest sibling, boosts libido, muscle and bone strength, and overall vitality, proving essential to women's health despite its subtle presence. Together, they form a dynamic team essential for our well-being. But what happens when they no longer work together efficiently? Let find out next.

2. What Happens in the Body

Symptoms in Perimenopause

We all associate perimenopause with hot flashes, night sweats, and irregular periods—but what if you're not experiencing these? How can you tell if you're in perimenopause? You're not alone in wondering. A 2021 study revealed that 90% of women had no education on perimenopause or menopause and felt that accessible information was lacking. When hormones start to fluctuate, they can trigger a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms, making this transition different for everyone.

Physical changes

- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia, or fatigue
- Palpitations, irregular heartbeat
- Hot flashes during the day or night
- Hair, skin, or nail changes
- Headaches or migraines
- Change in periods (irregular or heavy or light)
- Weight gain
- Joint pains and muscle aches, especially in the morning
- Urinary issues (vaginal dryness, frequent urination, incontinence, urinary tract infections)
- Bloating, nausea, and digestive troubles; irritable bowel syndrome; reflux
- Allergies
- Oral changes (burning mouth, bleeding gums, metallic taste)
- Tingling extremities, numbness
- Changes in body odour
- Tinnitus



Symptoms in perimenopause ...continued

Not only do we experience physical changes, we also experience psychological changes. Because these changes occur far in advance of your menstruation ceasing they are often are misdiagnosed. In a research survey for a programme that aired on the Channel 4 television network in the United Kingdom, 66% of respondents had been wrongly offered antidepressants for their perimenopause/menopause symptoms and 70% of respondents had reported brain fog as their most debilitating early symptom.

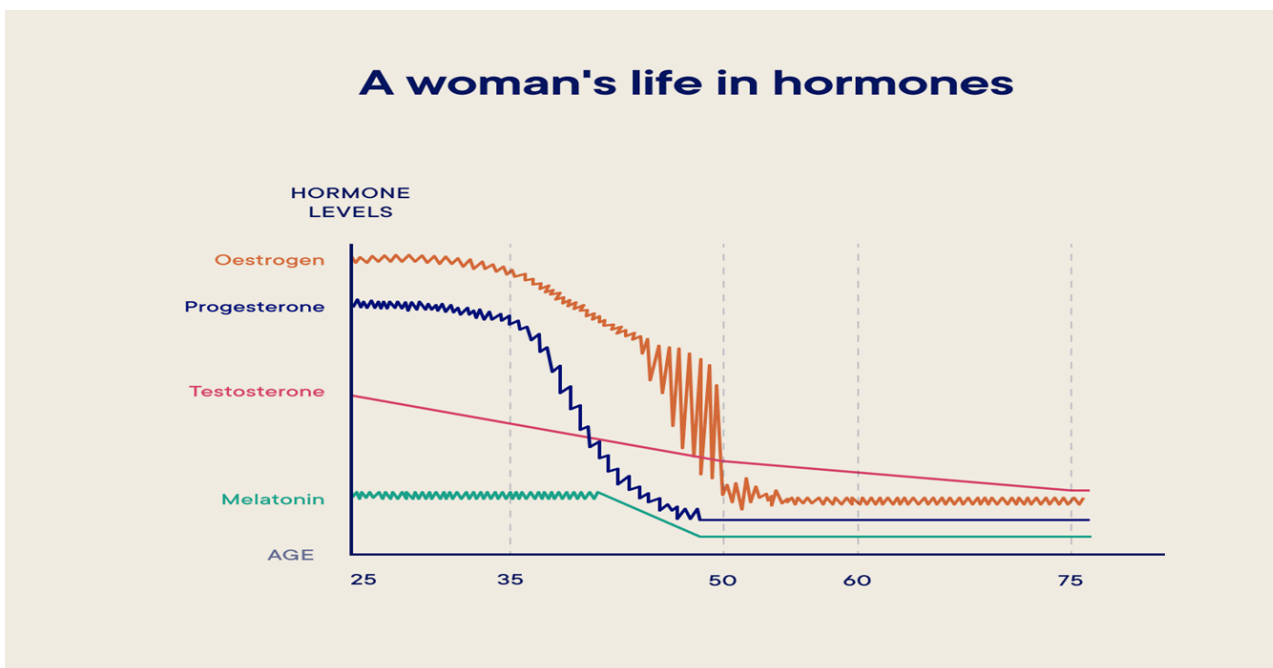


Psychological Changes

- Reduced ability to concentrate or focus
 - Brain fog
 - Problems with memory recall
 - Low mood, depression
 - Lack of libido
 - Tearfulness
 - Nervousness
 - Mood swings
 - Irritability
 - Worry or anxiety; feeling uneasy
 - Dizziness or feeling faint
 - Panic disorder
 - Low self-esteem
 - Lack of interest
 - Loss of self, feelings of being overwhelmed
 - Rage
-

So what is changing?

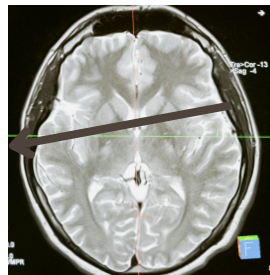
Remember in Chapter One when we discussed how women are born with millions of follicles (eggs) in their ovaries, and how the release of these eggs triggers the production of estrogen and progesterone? Here's what we didn't cover: once menstruation starts, we lose about 1,000 eggs each month. By our 40s, we may have only 5,000–10,000 eggs remaining. This significant loss of eggs reduces hormone production, playing a major role in the onset of perimenopause symptoms. It's not just about producing less estrogen, progesterone and pregnenolone. It's the imbalance of them, and with estrogen and progesterone no longer regulating testosterone and buffering cortisol the balance of our hormone system is further disrupted.



Looking at this chart, you can see how estrogen and progesterone take a dramatic nosedive—it's quite the drop, wouldn't you agree? They're still around but not as fully present as they used to be, like they've gone off to college or started their own lives and aren't as involved in the hormone family dynamic anymore. Meanwhile, testosterone's decline is less steep, but without her older sisters she starts to play a more prominent role in the family dynamic.

How hormone levels change.

The mother hormone, pregnenolone, without her, the family wouldn't exist! In the world of hormones, she works throughout the body, much like a mom raising kids and keeping the household running smoothly. However, as we age, pregnenolone levels decrease. Think of it as Mom stepping back, maybe working part-time and focusing more on herself and she definitely isn't having any more children. She doesn't even have the energy to regulate the younger siblings, which leaves some chaos behind. She'll still nudge estrogen and progesterone to help out, but neither of them are around as much now to help balance the mess. This hormonal shift can lead to common perimenopause symptoms like poor memory, fatigue, reduced concentration and attention, dry skin, joint and muscle pain, and a decrease in sex drive.



Hypothalamus the body's
thermometer

We haven't spent much time talking about Dad—**the brain**—in relation to hormone health. That's because, when everything's running smoothly, he mostly stays in the background, chiming in occasionally to keep the siblings in line. But now, Dad notices things aren't quite right. He senses estrogen isn't as present or helpful as she used to be, so he steps in, trying to cool down the situation by sending signals. Unfortunately, this can lead to a hormonal mix-up—Dad's way of overreacting—which results in the infamous hot flashes.

Here's the kicker: hot flashes aren't caused by actual heat but by the brain's confused response to a drop in estrogen. This mix-up can make you incredibly uncomfortable, especially since hot flashes strike unpredictably and at the worst times—leaving you soaking wet in the middle of the day or drenched in sweat in the middle of the night. Your body's trying to cool itself down when it doesn't need to, and you're left feeling miserable as a result.

How hormone levels change ...continued

Cortisol - Can cause and weight gain or in particular stubborn belly fat. This can happen at all stages of life and the stress doesn't have to be "life threatening" for it to increase. Peri-menopause, however, doesn't increase cortisol rather estrogen and progesterone are no longer being produced in high enough amounts to help keep it in check. This allows the excess cortisol to sit in the receptors for progesterone and further reduce it in the body. This then stimulates a constant fight or flight mode! And to top it off when the body is stressed it can even use progesterone to make more cortisol!

Testosterone - does decrease with age but not as dramatically as estrogen and progesterone which normally kept it check. In peri menopause estrogen and progesterone dip below the levels of testosterone and allows it to have more of an effect on the body.

3. Nutrition and Supplement

Healthy eating

Healthy eating doesn't mean never eating out, only eating salads or never having dessert. Understanding the basics of the foods you eat will make a major difference not only in how you feel but will also improve your chances of having mild perimenopause symptoms!
"Not all foods are equal" they are either nutritious or they aren't.

FAT	9 calories per 1 gram (20-30% of your diet)	Important building block for skin, cells, hormones and more	Limit: processed meats (bacon, burgers, kebabs), red meats, pastries or bakes goods, canola oil. Nutritious fats: nuts and seeds, avocados, fish, olive oil and sunflower oil
CARBS	4 calories per 1 gram (55% of your diet)	Body's preferred source of fuel	Limit: crackers, white rice, potatoes, white bread, chips Nutritious carbs: plant foods, vegetables, brown rice, kumera
FIBER	20-30g per day	Improves absorption of vitamins and minerals, helps to remove toxins, excess fats, and slows sugar absorption	Found in fruits and vegetables & whole grains
PROTEIN	1-1.7g per 1kg of body weight	decreases hunger, builds and repairs muscles & bones, builds enzymes & more	Limit: Fatty red meats Nutritious proteins: lean meats*, fish, nuts & seeds, soy, legumes, eggs

*lean meats: Meats with relatively low fat content. Skinless chicken or turkey, white fish, beef or lamb with fat removed or minimal marbling.

Healthy eating ... continued

Understanding these food groups is important. Did you know that alcohol & fat are the most calorie-dense foods? This is why paying attention to how much or how little you consume can be key to being a healthy weight.

Carbs are essential for our energy levels but are often consumed as snack foods. These processed “snack carbs” spike our insulin levels and create uneven energy which create energy dips. So eat more natural carbs! These are found in vegetables, fruit and whole grains. Natural carbs, have added fiber, which help to give us the fuel we need with more even energy throughout the day.

Protein is a must as it is the building block for everything from hormones to bones! But, balance is key, as over eating protein can cause weight-gain just as easily as fat!

Stay Hydrated, proper hydration is essential for overall health. But it is also important for regulating body temperature, to protect your organs! Drinking enough water ensures that both ovaries and testes are functioning healthily. If you are dehydrated, the cervical mucus that balances vaginal pH can becomes acidic.

A good place to start with your nutrition is to move to a anti-inflammatory diet. The modern diet creates inflammation in the body which can cause silent havoc within the different organ systems.

A great way to track is to use a Food tracking app. Check out Easy Diet Diary it is a great NZ/AU based tracking app.



EASY DIET DIARY

3 Day 1500-2000 Calorie Menu

Breakfast

Omelete

Minimum 2 eggs
1C chopped
veggies
seasoning to taste
2 slices cheese

Granola Bowl

1/3C granola
1/2C yogurt
2TBSP Nut butter
2tsp Chia seeds
1 Banana sliced
or mixed berries

2 Baked Banana Nut oatmeal cups

Lunch

Sandwich

2 slices whole
meal bread
1/2C shredded
chicken
1TBSP
pesto/hummus
1/4C lettuce
2 slices tomatoes

Salad

Spinach, 2 cups
goat cheese, 25g
cranberries, 1-
2TBSP
walnuts, 25g
Chicken breast,
115g
Balsamic
vinaigrette, 2 TBSP

Smoothie

Banana, 1
Strawberries, 1 cup
orange juice, 120ml
protein powder, 1
scoop
Ground flax, 1 tbsp
yogurt, 1/2 cup
ice

Dinner

Chicken Dinner

2 chicken thighs
skin removed
1/2 plate sautéed
mix veg

Salmon with Roasted courgette & Kumera

Bulgar with Mushroom and Feta

Snacks

- 1 Hard boiled egg
 - 20 Almonds
 - 2 Mandarines
 - Carrot with 3TBSP Hummus
 - 1 Coffee
 - Cheese & Crackers
 - 1 Banana
 - 1 Apple w/ 1TBSP nut butter
 - 1/2 Desert slice
 - 1 Coffee
 - Tuna, small can w/ 5 seeded crackers
 - Salami, 40g w 4 slices cheese
 - 2 Biscuits
 - 1 Coffee
-

Recipie

Bulgar with Mushrooms & Feta (Serves 4)

3/4 c plus 2TBSP or 150g Bulgar Wheat
500g mushrooms thinly sliced or torn apart
1 C plus 1 TBSP/ 250ml boiling water
2TBSP thyme
Salt and pepper
2TBSP balsamic vinegar
1/4 C plus 1tsp / 65ml olive oil
1/2c/ 10g Dill roughly chopped
2 large onion thinly sliced
60g Feta crumbled
1tsp cumin seeds
1tsp Chili flakes (optional)

Rinse bulger wheat and place in a bowl. Mix in 1/4tsp salt and some pepper, then pour in boiling water. Cover bowl with plastic or lid and set aside for 20 min, until liquid has been absorbed and bulger is soft. Drain if there is any liquid left and set aside

Meanwhile, put 2 tsp of oil into a large pan and place over med-high heat. Add onion and fry for 7-8 minutes, until soft and caramelised, can add 1TBSP of water. Add 1/2tsp of the cumin and continue to fry for 1-2 minutes., until dark golden brown. Remove from pan and set aside.

Add the remaining 2TBSP plus 1tsp of oil to the same pan and increase heat to high. Mix in the mushrooms and 1/2tsp of salt and fry for 6-8min, stirring frequently, until the mushrooms have browned and softened. Add the remaining 1/2tsp cumin and the thyme and continue to cook for 1 min, stirring continuously. Pour in balsamic vinegar and continue to cook for about 30 seconds. it should reduce to practically nothing. Stir in bulgar wheat, onion, dill, feta and chili flakes, until warmed through, then remove from heat

Recipie

Baked Salmon (Serves 2)

250g salmon

butter

2tsp dill

lemon slices

Preheat oven to 200c

Salmon is going to be wrapped in a foil pocket to bake.

Get a piece of aluminium foil large enough to create a wrapped package of your salmon. Place a slightly smaller piece of baking paper on top.

Place salmon skin side down on the baking paper. Top with 3 thin slices of butter, dill and 3 lemon slices.

Fold closed the baking paper first. Then bring the long edges of your foil together. Fold them over the salmon to create a packet, making sure to seal the edges.

Bake for 20min or until salmon flakes apart.

Courgette and Kumara can be chopped and then air fried, baked or roasted with salt and pepper.

“ Nutritional status is very important; The symptoms of perimenopause can be significantly reduced and made tolerable by achieving and maintaining a healthy nutritional status. ”

Supplements

What	What does it help with	Dosage
Maca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptogen- balances out all the hormones 	
Zinc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dials down cortisol • reduces in inflammation • helps with skin, hair & nails 	Doses up to 30mg are safe (signs of deficiencies include hair loss, white spots on nails, dermatitis)
Magnesium Glycinate or bisglycinate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insomnia • Panic attacks • Fatigue • Hot flushes • Headaches • reduces risk of insulin resistance 	300-400mg
B-Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches • Mood Swings • Insomnia • Fatigue • Memory loss 	

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important tips

Find your own balance!

There is no secret magic diet, no quick fix, no wonder pill.

Embrace, Accept and Change

Be moderate and educate yourself

Weight

Being over weight can affect your perimenopausal symptoms. It's not about being a perfect weight. It is about being a healthy weight and even a small weight-loss or gain can improve your symptoms. Here are some ways to find out if your weight is ideal.

1. Was it-to-Height ratio (WtHR) is the best measurement across all ethnic groups for general health and fertility. Your waist circumference should be less than half your height.
2. Although not my favorite baseline, Body mass index, (BMI) can also be a starting place. A healthy BMI is considered to be between 18.5-24.9.*
3. You can also check out Ideal body Weight Calculators online to give you an estimate if you're curious.

Keep in mind that all of these measurements are just to help you know where you stand. There is no perfect weight! Just work on finding the healthiest you.

*BMI does not account for muscle mass, bone density, body composition, racial or sexual differences.

4. Movement during Perimenopause

Exercise or “movement” as I prefer to call it is an important part of Perimenopause. It helps remove toxins, build strength increase mood, regulate hormones, and ensure you’re in good physical shape while your body undergoes hormonal changes.

So how much should you do? The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (active enough to sweat) a week, roughly 20 minutes a day. Variety is also important in your routine as it ensures well rounded fitness & health. Mixing up your routine not only prevents boredom but also provides numerous benefits for your body.

Now’s the time to try something new! Most of all it is important to find something that you enjoy doing so you keep doing it!

Physical activity Guidelines

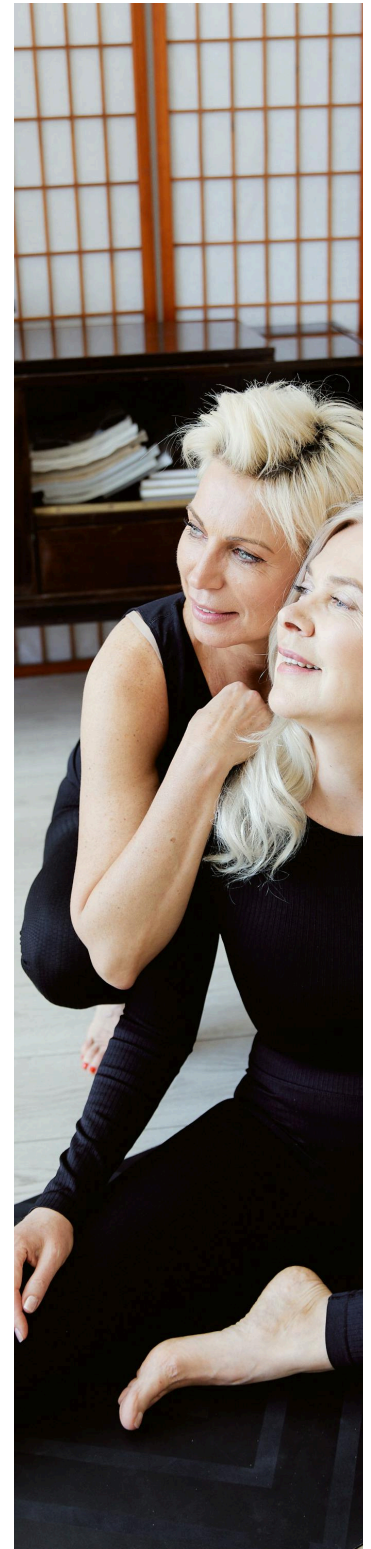
- ✓ Any physical activity is better than none
- ✓ Be active most days of the week
- ✓ Accumulate 150–300 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75–150 minutes of vigorous physical activity or a combination of both a week
- ✓ Do muscle strengthening activities 2 days a week
- ✓ Minimize high joint impacts sports



Find strength

how to improve your physical health

- ✓ Practice Mindfulness - engage in meditation, deep breathing, Yoga, Pilates or go for a walk.
- ✓ Prioritize Sleep - good sleeping patterns ensure enough rest for your mind to recharge and reset.
- ✓ Strengthening the joints: counteract muscle loss and bone density decline
- ✓ HIIT: Short, intense bursts of activity, then rest e.g. 30 sec sprint - recover to normal heart beat and repeat between 3-5 times. It helps maintain lean muscle and metabolic rate but should be done carefully to avoid over-stressing the body
- ✓ Exercise should be done progressive and balanced, not excessive. Stressing muscles helps them grow, but adequate recovery is crucial, especially during perimenopause.
- ✓ The optimal approach combines resistance training, aerobic activity, and recovery-focused exercise.
- ✓ Adjust the time and duration of your session - shorter but more frequently. Lower impact sports at night - more powerful movements in the morning



Find balance

how to improve your well being

- ✓ Routine - create a schedule that provides consistency in your life.
- ✓ Express Gratitude - keep a gratitude journal or regularly reflect on the things you are thankful for.
- ✓ Help Others - volunteering and acts of kindness can boost your sense of purpose and well-being.
- ✓ Self-Compassion - be kind to yourself
- ✓ Learn to Say No - set boundaries to stop overcommitting and becoming overwhelmed
- ✓ Nature and Outdoor Time - spending time in nature and getting fresh air can have a calming effect on your mind.
- ✓ Talk to your partner, husband, family. Involve them in your journey and let them help you.



Remember that everyone's mental well-being journey is unique. It's important to find what works best for you and to seek professional help if you're feeling overwhelmed.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Preparing your body for perimenopause is important to avoid stress and minimise any symptoms.

So check in with your health practitioner, review your diet and lifestyle choices, and make sure your emotional well-being is in a good place. With all your bases covered, you should be well on your way to having the best time of your life

If you find that you're still struggling with the in and outs of perimenopause, reach out to us at New Habits Nutrition for a personalised program.



Need more help, contact a nutritionist at New Habits Nutrition today for a one-on-one consultation for your specific needs.

Thank you!



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