

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Minimising menopausal symptoms.

There are various options for minimising the symptoms of menopause. Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) is not suitable for everyone, due to factors such as personal medical history, family history of certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, or other contraindications. Growing evidence shows that adopting healthy lifestyle changes can help reduce the symptoms of perimenopause and menopause and prevent long-term conditions such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

Healthy Diet

A healthy diet plays a key role in managing menopause symptoms and promoting long-term health. A Mediterranean diet, rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and lean proteins like fish, has been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, dementia, and certain cancers. Limiting saturated fats, processed meats, and sugars is also important. Reducing alcohol consumption and quitting smoking are additional steps that support overall health.

Your doctor can also advise whether you need supplements such as iron, vitamin D, calcium, or vitamin B12 to support your health during menopause.

Exercise

The Australian physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines for adults aged 18–64 recommend physical activity for all adults, including women during and after menopause. The recommendation is for either:

- 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity physical activity weekly, or
- 1.25 hours of vigorous-intensity physical activity weekly.

Weight-Bearing Exercise

Weight-bearing exercises such as walking, jogging, hiking, dancing, and stair climbing are important during menopause because they help strengthen bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis by working against gravity.

Resistance Training

Resistance training (using weights, resistance bands, or bodyweight exercises like squats) further enhances bone strength, maintains muscle mass, and supports healthy weight management, which can alleviate menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes.

Non-weight-bearing exercises like cycling and swimming are excellent for cardiovascular fitness and general wellbeing but do not help improve bone density since they do not require the body to support its own weight against gravity.

Regular physical activity, especially weight-bearing and resistance exercises, provides broad benefits, including improving heart health, bone mineral density, energy levels, sleep quality, and concentration, while also benefiting mental health.

Reformer Pilates

Incorporating reformer Pilates and other forms of resistance training can reduce body fat, strengthen muscles, and increase calorie burning. These exercises also improve posture, balance, flexibility, and mental health, contributing to overall wellbeing during menopause.

Yoga

There is evidence that yoga can help reduce menopausal symptoms. Yoga and meditation are effective strategies for managing stress whilst improving strength, balance, flexibility, sleep, and overall wellbeing.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

CBT is a specific type of counselling that has been shown to significantly improve hot flashes, depression, sleep disturbances, and sexual concerns, though it may have limited effects on anxiety.

Hypnosis

Some women find hypnosis helpful in reducing menopause symptoms and improving sleep. While more research is needed, it can be a complementary option for symptom management.

Avoiding Triggers

Certain situations can trigger hot flashes, including stress, hot drinks (such as tea and coffee), alcohol (especially red wine), spicy foods, hot showers, smoking, and hot weather. Minimising or avoiding these triggers can help manage symptoms.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Emotional and mental health are important during menopause. Mood swings, anxiety, and depression are common but can be managed with appropriate support. Mindfulness, meditation, and professional counselling are effective strategies for promoting mental wellness and coping with emotional changes during menopause.

Non-Beneficial Therapies

In contrast to the evidence-based therapies mentioned above, acupuncture, chiropractic manipulations, reflexology, and magnetic therapy have not demonstrated significant benefits for managing menopausal symptoms. However, if individuals find these methods helpful, they can be continued alongside evidence-based treatments like hormone and non-hormonal medications.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [Alternatives to Menopausal Hormone Therapy \(MHT\)](#)
- [Menopause and weight gain](#)
- [MHT: the new term for HRT](#)