

# Menopause: Time for a Change

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Menopause is often called “the change.” Women’s bodies do go through many changes at this time.

Some changes may be welcome. On the upside, we will not have periods to deal with anymore. And birth control is no longer necessary.

But some changes may not be so welcome. Until menopause, estrogen helps protect our bones and our heart. With the drop in estrogen, the chance of bone loss and heart disease increases. And it may become more difficult to keep extra pounds off after menopause.



Menopause will be different for each woman. But there are things we can all do to make the changes of menopause go more smoothly.

## EAT A PLANT-BASED DIET

A calorie-controlled diet moderate in fat and rich in vegetables, fruits, grains, and calcium can help ensure your health during this time of life. Choose a variety of foods in different colors. That helps you get all the nutrients you need.

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Add soy foods to your diet. The plant estrogens in soy may help reduce hot flashes and keep bones healthy. Soy foods are good for your heart, too. There are easy ways to add soy to your menu. Try veggie burgers and soy-milk shakes. Other foods with plant estrogens are flaxseed, almonds, peanuts, peas, corn, and apples.

Diets high in protein and sodium can rob your bones of calcium. Avoid meat-heavy meals and watch the salt.

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### **LIMIT ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE**

Heavy alcohol use has been linked to bone loss. Alcohol also may increase your hot flashes. Limit alcohol to no more than one drink a day.

Caffeine can prevent calcium from being absorbed by your body. It may set off hot flashes, make your bladder full more often, and keep you from getting a good night's sleep. These are all good reasons to limit your intake of caffeine. If you are a heavy coffee, tea, or cola drinker, cut back a little at a time. That helps your body adjust.

### **HOT FLASHES**

If you are bothered by hot flashes, it may help to drink cold water when a hot flash begins. Hot flashes happen more often during the night for many women. Wear cotton and keep a thermos of cold water by your bed. Spicy foods and hot drinks may bring on hot flashes.

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## **GET UP AND GO**

Regular physical activity helps you control your weight, build your bones, increase your energy, and raise your spirits. Some women have fewer hot flashes when they get exercise each day. Try for 30 minutes on most days. Take a brisk walk with a friend or ride a bike. Break it up into two or three parts during the day if you need to.

## **A NEW START**

Menopause is a natural event. One of the best attitudes to have about menopause is to think of it not just as an ending, but as a beginning. The second half of your life can be as healthy and happy as the first. Many women find it more enjoyable!

Eat a healthful diet and get regular physical activity. You'll be on your way to managing the symptoms of menopause and enjoying your new time of life.

## **NOTES:**