



## To Menopause and Beyond Nutrition & Lifestyle

### Doable Nutrition

**Not a time for deprivation** - focus on positive, nourishing nutrition, adding in the good stuff, crowding out the not so good.

**Bioindividuality** – no one diet for all. Individual nutrition is based on genetics, culture, financial constraints, background and microbiome

**Blood Sugar Rollercoaster** - high sugar foods lead to mood issues, fatigue, anxiety, weight gain and cravings. Riding the rollercoaster leaves less time to regulate the lady sex hormones – oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone, increasing perimenopausal symptoms.

**Mediterranean Diet** - Research suggests good for menopause transition. Lots of veg, fruits, legumes, wholegrains, olive oil, nuts & seeds, plus fish & seafood, moderate dairy and limited meat.

- Anti-inflammatory – can reduce risk of chronic disease from inflammation such as auto-immune conditions and illnesses.
- Good for heart health, joint pain, bone density, dementia prevention, depression, T2DM all linked to menopause and reduced hormones.
- Low in processed foods, sugar, and high in fibre so beneficial for gut microbiome which positively affects hormones, immune system, mood etc.
- Eat the rainbow – more colours = more antioxidants, vitamins & minerals.
- Organic is great but if inaccessible, aim for frozen which captures lots of nutrients.

### **Protein, Carbs, Fibre & Fats**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Protein</b>       | Building blocks for all cells, muscle retention, energy, sleep, libido, skin, hair – all affected by menopause. Start with a protein-based meal instead of high sugar cereals or toast & jam. Eggs, scrambled tofu or Greek yoghurt, berries & seeds.   |
| <b>Carbohydrates</b> | Choose complex carbs (brown rice, jumbo oats, beans, veg, berries) to keep the rollercoaster in check. Bread, pasta, potatoes (starchy simple carbs), ok but think wholegrain, portion control, and not having super rich sauces or being deep fried.   |
| <b>Fibre</b>         | Helps bloating, constipation, feeding good gut bugs, weight gain. Mostly found in veg & fruit (skin on), legumes, oats, wholegrains, nuts & seeds. Add where possible – nuts & seeds to smoothies, porridge, salad, yoghurt, beans & lentils to sauces, stews, soups, salads.   |
| <b>Fats</b>          | Not to be feared if the good kind especially during perimenopause. Needed for sex hormones, brain neurons, cell walls, and to absorb some vitamins. Saturated fats thought to be implicated in heart disease but depends on quality & quantity. Include oily fish, avocado, nuts & seeds, olive oil. Avoid trans fats – doughnuts, margarine etc. |

*Also, about HOW you eat: Enjoyment, spending time with others, taking time not stuffing a packet sandwich in on the run or at a laptop.*



## Common Symptoms & Food Support

### Hot Flushes & Night Sweats

Some foods / lifestyle behaviours exacerbate them: *Alcohol, Spicy Food, Caffeine, Stress, Smoking. Reduce or remove.* Phytoestrogens from isoflavones (soya) and lignans (flax seeds & legumes) thought to help due to mild oestrogenic effect. Research inconclusive and appears to work for some women but not others due to genetics and gut microbiome. Can take a few months and possibly interfere with thyroid medications.

### Low Mood

What goes in the mouth affects the brain, positively & negatively thanks to the Vagus Nerve. 90% of the happy hormone Serotonin made in the gut. Reaching for 'comfort' foods - biscuits, cakes, pizza etc may lift mood initially but the high soon becomes a low. Can lead to erratic eating, unbalanced blood sugar & increase stress hormones. Protein, fibre & good fats at every meal to keep you satiated & happier. Caffeine & alcohol can have a negative effect on sleep, anxiety & mood as tolerance levels can change at this time.

### Weight / Fat Gain

The body naturally puts on weight from mid 30's. This creeps up, clothes are tighter; dress size is up & fat cells may shift more around the middle as the body holds onto them for oestrogen. Sedentary behaviour more common with erratic hormones causing fatigue. Important to pay attention due to risk of long-term health conditions such as T2DM, heart disease, dementia, breast cancer.

#### *Things to think about:*

- How many meals/snacks do you eat?
- If you are a breakfast person, do you have sugary cereals or toast & jam then hungry by 11?
- Are you having enough protein & veg? How could you incorporate more?
- Are you 'picking'? Keep a food diary or piece of paper on the fridge and write down EVERYTHING eaten.
- Are you eating lots of processed foods? Batch cook & freeze at the weekend, invest in a slow cooker.
- Craving or snacking, are you actually fed up, stressed, need another sugar hit? Call a friend, make a cuppa.
- How big is your plate? Are you filling it too much?
- Take time to plan. If there's 'no time', think how long you're scrolling through Facebook, Instagram.

*If the day goes T UP, it's just a day, tomorrow is another one. KEEP THE STRESS AWAY, it won't help!*

### Bloating

Bloating & gas can be worse during menopause thought due to STRESS upsetting the gut so fewer digestive enzymes & less stomach acid. Some foods may also now irritate such as onions/garlic, high histamine foods & caffeine. Naturally gas producing foods may react more such as broccoli, beans & cauliflower. Chew food properly but avoid chewing gum & fizzy drinks. Other causes may be adding fibre too much, too quickly and eating when stressed.

### Bladder Issues

Pelvic floor can be affected by lower oestrogen and some foods. Spicy food, citrus fruits and fizzy drinks can cause the body to spasm, increasing urges. Alcohol and caffeine can dehydrate. Drink enough water to reduce bladder irritating concentrated urine but watch the timing with nighttime loo visits.

### Headaches

Headaches are thought to be related to hormones and reduced oestrogen can make things worse. Stay hydrated and limit caffeine & alcohol. Chocolate and some citrus fruits can be an issue for some. Keep a diary to work out triggers.

### Skin & Hair

Nourish inside out. *Dry skin*- cut back on processed, high sugar foods. Increase healthy fats like avo's, olive oil, nuts & seeds. Balance blood sugar as longer-term glucose issues are known to increase AGE's (advanced glycation end products), thought to damage collagen. *Acne & thinning hair*- male hormone dominance. Lots of plants, less processed foods + good gut health.



## Manageable Movement

Research shows movement helps reduce hot flushes, joint / muscle pain, weight management, mood, sleep, concentration, all known at this stage. Also beneficial for long term health conditions such as heart disease, T2DM, osteoporosis and depression.

### BUT

- Don't drag yourself to the gym when it's not 'your thing'? It increases stress & negates potential benefits.
- Consistency is key.
- 2 birds - Listen to podcasts/books at the same time, have a kitchen disco as you're cooking.
- Make it important, put it in your diary
- Join a group / class if you would like company
- Set small tasks for as many days as possible, no need for long dragged-out sessions
- Do weight bearing movement & weights to avoid muscle loss & strength and protect bones, both needed with reduced oestrogen.

*What you do now is going to keep you strong into your older years – you may only be 2/3 of the way through life.*

N.B. If currently not a mover and shaker, don't suddenly run 10 km or do a grueling weightlifting session, the body will scream for days. Build it up, protect the joints, muscles & ligaments, they are needed.

### Suggestions

| Walking / Running   | Weights   | HIIT   | YOGA/PILATES   | NEAT   |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| free, convenient, no time limit, no equipment needed, fresh air. Try short blasts up hills as well as steady on the flat. If you run already, try some sprints. | Age = reduced muscle. Muscle helps metabolism, bone density & fitting into clothes. No need for hours in sweaty gyms. Youtube, local classes, invest in PT sessions then do yourself. | Short bursts followed by recovery. Classes, YouTube videos, not all burpees, any level & time (10-20 mins). Can lift cortisol levels, not advisable daily. If feeling anxious or stressed, may not be the best idea. | Available for all, classes or online. Reconnect body & mind, reduce anxious, busy brains & help strengthen & sculpt, aids pelvic floor issues, joint pain, BP & digestion. Studies linking yoga with better sleep. | <i>Non-exercise activity thermogenesis.</i> Relates to normal life- cleaning, gardening, shopping. Easy to increase & burn calories. Take the stairs. Park away from the supermarket door. Walk instead of drive |

**Overexercising is a thing!** The body needs time to repair & renew muscles, cells, hormone levels. If overly pushed, fight or flight hormones are raised causing extra stress and can have opposite effect. One or two sessions / week should be restorative such as yoga, pilates, relaxing walk.

## Sleep - when you can get it

One of the biggest menopausal upsets; not being able to get to sleep, stay asleep, night sweats BUT so important for all body and mind functioning.

### How can we help ourselves?

- **Get off the hormone sugar rollercoaster, cut wakeful caffeine** (from midday) & **reduce alcohol** (may knock you out but won't keep you knocked out).
- **Keep hydrated** earlier in the day to avoid nighttime loo visits.
- **Aim to finish eating 3 hours + before bed.** Not too full, not too hungry. If hungry have an oatcake & nut butter before bed.
- **Reduce bedtime scrolling.** Blue light from gadgets reduces melatonin production (sleepy hormone) - body thinks it's daytime. Apps such as CALM, podcasts, meditations are useful (with night filter on).
- **Dispose of the days' stress / anxiety.** Try calming bath, lavender sprays or offload into a journal.
- **Nanny nappers beware.** 20 mins max and no later than 3pm so sleep not affected.
- **Dim the lights.** Switch off overhead lights at night, use side lamps / candles, gets the brain ready for bed.
- **Salute the day.** Getting out in daylight asap (even in jammies), can help nighttime sleep.
- **Regular baby bedtime routine,** the body loves a schedule. You may pay for late night weekends all week.
- **Goldilocks bedroom.** Not too hot, not too cold, but keep it dark.



- **2 Single duvets** for you / partner if night sweats an issue. Special bedsheets & pj's that help wick away sweat.
- **Mindful breathing** to relax the nervous system and reduce wakeful anxiety.
- **Avoid clockwatching.** Research shows it's better to get up & go to a different room with low lighting. Read (don't scroll), return to bed when sleepy.

*This is a time of change so routines may need to change also*

### Stress & Mindset – The Good, The Bad, The Fabulous

**Stress** - raises fight, flight, flee hormones, negatively affecting body systems. Aim to keep the nervous system calm to help brain fog, digestive issues, hot flushes, anxiety, headaches, lots of perimenopausal symptoms. Stress also means the body has to sort that out first, so digestion and nutrient absorption take a back seat.

*What stress relievers might work for you? Remember BIOINDIVIDUALITY*

- **BREATHE.** Stop & take long deep breaths. In through the nose, hold for a few seconds, out through the mouth. Make the 'out' breath longer than the 'in', feel the tummy/rib cage expand & relax.
- **Think Craig David – 'I'm walking away'** even just for a few minutes or do some gentle relaxing movement.
- **Meditate YOUR way.** It's not all sitting cross legged & chanting (unless that works). Sit quietly for a few minutes, listen to a guided meditation/calming song, or walk mindfully. No right or wrong way & it may or may not be for you (if not, could cause more stress).
- **Have a magnesium (Epsom) salt bath.** Magnesium enters the skin to help calm the nervous system & work alongside serotonin (happy hormone) and melatonin (sleepy hormone). Be aware alcohol & stress use up magnesium stores.
- **POSITIVITY is key.** Not all doom and gloom, can be a time for exciting changes, reinvention. Time to Shine.

### **Mindset**

Mental Health can be affected with changing hormones and life e.g. work, care of elderly family / children, body changes. Aim for positivity, functionality and enjoyment. If things are tough, SHARE. Be honest with partners, friends, kids, family, medical professionals.

*What might make you feel better:*

- Songs / Playlists – calming or super loud rock/pop music.
- Brain dump / keep a gratitude journal, simple things you're grateful each day.
- Go for a walk
- Listen to a meditation/mindfulness
- Colour in / Paint
- DIY / Cooking / Baking – just don't stick your face in the icing bowl.

*WHATEVER WORKS FOR YOU NOT ANYONE ELSE*

### Tiara Time

Women 40+ - pregnancy, early childhood, empty nest syndrome, single, married, divorced, happy, not happy, not sure if happy. 'Is this it?' 'Do I want a career after kids?' 'Do I want a new career?' 'Am I fulfilled in my relationships – husbands, friends, family?' All can cause a buildup of **thoughts + changing hormones = LOTS OF QUESTIONS**

Maybe things sort themselves out, maybe discuss with a professional. Talking therapy can be a fabulous way to let out some of those deepest darkest secrets and either let them go or plan some changes. It's a time to allow yourself to be happy.

*FIND time to wear a TIARA*

- Would you like to go for a regular massage / get your nails done?
- Would you like to study?
- Would you like to go and sit at the beach for 20 minutes by yourself?
- Would you like to curl up in your bed and read a magazine?

*WHAT WOULD YOUR TIARA TIME BE?*



## Raw Chocolate Recipe

approx. 24 Chocs (depending on mould size)

100gm Raw Cacao Butter (buy online & organic if possible)  
4 tablespoon Raw Cacao Powder (stronger flavour than just cocoa powder)  
4 tablespoon Maple Syrup OR Coconut Sugar (whizzed)  
Pinch of salt

| Flavours  | Approx.     | Extras                  | Approx.          |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| * Peppermint Oil/Essence  | 5 drops     | Roasted Quinoa          | 2 tbsp           |
| *Orange / Lemon Essential Oil                                       | 5 drops     | Chopped Nuts            | 2 tbsp           |
| Rose Essence  | 5 drops     | Cacao Nibs              | 2 tbsp           |
| Organic freeze-dried berries  |             | Pomegranate Seeds       | 3-4 in each choc |
| Maca Powder – ‘superfood’ & complete protein, slight toffee flavour | ½ -1 tbsp   | Anything else you fancy |                  |
| Lucuma Powder – ‘superfood’, slight maple, custard, caramel flavour | ½ - 1 tbsp  |                         |                  |
| Camu Camu Powder – ‘superfood’, tangy flavour                       | ½ - 1 tbsp. |                         |                  |

\* If using essential oils, make sure they are edible, good quality and use sparingly or if you’re not sure just use food flavourings.

### Method:

- Melt the cacao butter over a low heat ONLY till melted. Either microwave or carefully over a pot of boiling water.
- Transfer to a bowl or glass jug.
- Add the sieved cacao powder and syrup or coconut sugar
- Whisk
- If adding other flavours, add now and mix again
- Pour into moulds

*(If using Extras, you may find it easier to put a few into the bottom of the mould and then pour the molten choc mix on top)*

- Put mould in freezer for approx. 20 mins
- Keep in an airtight box in the fridge. As they have no major preservatives, they will melt quickly.
- ENJOY