

Six Simple Steps for managing your menopause



Menopause brings changes that can feel overwhelming - hot flushes, night sweats, mood swings, and weight gain. But you have the power to ease these symptoms naturally. The great news? Simple, everyday food choices can make a real difference to how you feel during this transition. You don't need fancy supplements or extreme diets - just real, whole foods and a few smart swaps.

===== Quick Wins =====

- Switch to soya milk** - up to 50% reduction in hot flushes

- Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of milled flax seeds on breakfast cereal** - reduces hot flush frequency

- Do strength training twice weekly** - to strengthen bones and manage blood sugar

- Have tinned sardines or salmon** - vitamin D and calcium for bones, omega-3 for mood

- Choose wholemeal bread instead of white** - steady blood sugar prevents mood swings and weight gain

- Have at least 5 portion of fruit and veg daily** - vitamins and minerals to support you through menopause

WARNING: THESE QUICK WINS WORK BEST WHEN CAFFEINE, ALCOHOL, SPICY FOODS, REFINED CARBS AND PROCESSED FOODS ARE KEPT TO A MINIMUM

Food and lifestyle choices are really important after menopause. The right diet and exercise not only helps with managing symptoms - but can make hormone replacement therapy (HRT) even more effective. The right foods can actually reduce hot flushes, protect your bones and help you maintain a healthy weight. Food works alongside or without HRT - it addresses the hormonal changes at their root, not just the symptoms.

Change can be hard - especially big changes. For most of us it's easier to make lots of small changes, one at a time. Working through these tips will help new healthy habits stick - giving you better health today and for the rest of your life.

This guide helps you take small steps towards managing menopause naturally. You don't need fancy supplements or extreme diets - just real, whole foods and a few smart swaps. Many women notice improvements in hot flushes within weeks of adding soya foods daily.

Every healthy choice you make is like a small gift to your future self.

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1.

TRY SOYA PRODUCTS

Why it works: Soya contains plant compounds called isoflavones that act like oestrogen in your body. Studies show 40-80mg of isoflavones daily can reduce hot flushes by up to 50% and improve bone density. This is one of the most researched foods for menopause relief.

What to do:

- Aim for 1-2 portions of soya foods daily
- Try tofu, tempeh, soya milk or edamame beans
- Spread throughout the day for best results
- Choose fortified soya milk for bonus calcium that can help with bone strength

TOP TIP: Start gradually if soya is new to you. Your gut may need time to adjust. Start with one portion daily for a week, then increase to two.

Simple Swaps:

- Dairy milk ➔ Soya milk in tea, coffee or cereals
- Meat in stir-fries ➔ Tofu or tempeh
- Regular yoghurt ➔ Soya yoghurt
- Snack crisps ➔ Edamame beans (roasted or steamed in the pod)

Make it easy:

- Keep soya milk in the fridge as your default milk
- Buy ready-marinated tofu for quick meals
- Add frozen edamame to soups & salads
- Try soya mince in Bolognese or chilli
- Blend silken tofu into smoothies for creaminess

TOP TIP - Just two tablespoons of milled flax seeds on your daily porridge can reduce hot flushes



'Poke' or 'Buddha' bowls with tofu, soy beans and piles of colourful veg are a great way to help manage symptoms

2.

HAVE FLAX SEEDS DAILY

Why it works: Flax seeds are packed with plant oestrogens called lignans. Research shows 2 tablespoons daily may reduce how often you get hot flushes. They also provide fibre and omega-3 fats that support heart health and weight management.

What to do:

- Aim for about 2 tablespoons (about 20g) of milled flax seeds daily
- Buy them ground or grind whole seeds yourself - whole seeds pass through undigested

Simple Swaps:

- Breakfast cereal topping ➔ Sprinkle milled flax seeds on porridge or cereal
- Breadcrumbs ➔ Use ground flaxseed in meatballs or fish cakes
- Plain yoghurt ➔ Yoghurt with flax seeds and berries
- Regular bread ➔ Seeded bread with added flax seeds
- Biscuits or toast ➔ Flaxseed crackers

TOP TIP: Flax seeds work best when combined with plenty of water - they absorb liquid and help keep you regular too!

Make it easy:

- Keep a jar of milled flax seeds next to your kettle
- Add a spoonful to smoothies every morning
- Stir into yoghurt or porridge
- Mix into pancake or muffin batter
- Sprinkle over salads for a nutty crunch

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3.

EAT MORE OILY FISH

Why it works: Oily fish provides vitamin D, which helps your body absorb calcium for strong bones. It also gives you omega-3 fats that may reduce hot flushes and support mood during menopause. Your body can't make omega-3 fats, so you need to get them from food.

What to do:

- Eat two portions of oily fish every week. One portion is a tin of sardines or a palm sized piece
- Choose salmon, mackerel, sardines, trout or herring
- Fresh, frozen, or tinned all count
- Don't waste the bones in tinned fish like sardines - they're soft enough to eat and packed with nutrients including calcium for your bones!

TOP TIP: If you are not keen on the flavours of oily fish **try a fish oil supplement.** They are cheap, flavourless and you can even get vegan varieties made from algal oil. Look for at least 1000 mg of EPA+DHA daily to be effective.

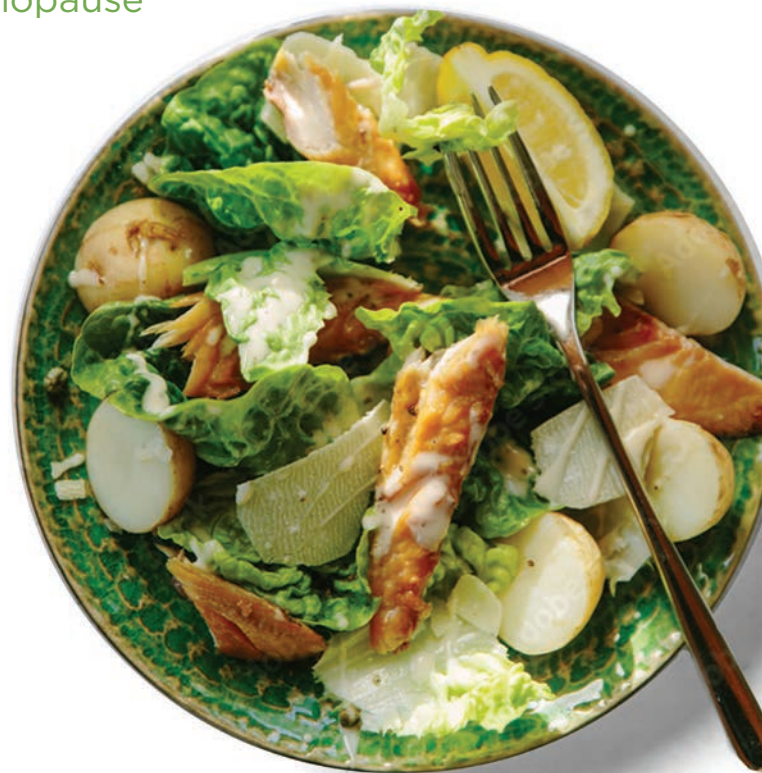
Simple Swaps:

- Cheese sandwich ➡ Salmon sandwich or mackerel on toast
- Tuna mayo ➡ Salmon or mackerel mayo (tuna isn't oily)
- Meat in pasta ➡ Smoked mackerel or flaked salmon
- Plain crackers ➡ Crackers with sardine or mackerel pâté

Make it easy:

- Keep tins of sardines, salmon and mackerel in the cupboard
- Buy frozen salmon fillets for quick meals
- Try smoked mackerel - no cooking needed
- Add tinned salmon to jacket potatoes or pasta
- Try something different and make fish the focus of Sunday dinner once a month

The British Menopause Society recommends that all postmenopausal women supplement with 1000 iu vitamin D daily and at least 2 portions of calcium rich food per day for healthy bones.



Adding smoked mackerel to a salad is a simple and affordable way to include more oily fish in your diet

4.

BUILD STRENGTH

Why it works: Resistance and weight-bearing exercise is the single most important thing you during menopause. Bones lose their strength after menopause but weight training - or any form of resistance training that builds muscle - is the best way to slow this down or stop it completely. More muscle also means that more sugar can be taken out of the blood and stored - better blood glucose control is key for weight management and reducing sugar cravings during menopause.

What to do:

- Do resistance training 2-3 times per week
- Include weight-bearing activities - walking, dancing, climbing stairs, gardening
- Try bodyweight exercises, resistance bands or weights
- Start gentle and build up gradually
- Supervised training shows the best results

TOP TIP: You don't need a gym membership. Bodyweight exercises like squats, lunges, and press-ups work brilliantly. Start with 10 minutes twice a week and build from there.

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Make it easy:

- Find a YouTube channel or app with beginner strength workouts
- Join a local exercise class - having others helps motivation
- Keep resistance bands or light weights by the tv or by the bed.
- Make it social - exercise with a friend
- 'Habit Stack' - squats while waiting for the kettle, press ups while the shower warms up, sit ups before sitting down to watch TV
- Walk more in daily life - park further away from work or the supermarket, cycle rather than drive or take the stairs instead of a lift or an escalator.

5.

CHOOSE WHOLEGRAIN

Why it works: Wholegrain foods keep your blood sugar steady, which helps prevent energy crashes, mood swings, and sugar cravings. They're high in fibre, which keeps you fuller for longer and helps with weight management - a key challenge during menopause when metabolism naturally slows down.

What to do:

- Switch all white carbs to wholegrain versions
- Include one wholegrain food at each meal
- Look for "whole" in the ingredients list (wholemeal, wholegrain, whole oats)
- Combine with protein to slow digestion even more Resistance

TOP TIP: Whole grains take longer to chew, which naturally helps you eat more slowly and feel satisfied with smaller portions.

Simple Swaps:

- White bread ➡ Wholemeal, granary or seeded bread
- White rice ➡ Brown rice, quinoa or bulgur wheat
- White pasta ➡ Whole wheat or brown pasta
- Cornflakes ➡ Porridge oats, Weetabix or Shredded Wheat
- White wraps ➡ Wholemeal wraps or pittas



Cook spelt grains, brown rice and lentils in boiling water, cool and season with olive oil, spice and cider vinegar. Store in the fridge and use as a base for your lunch salad all week.

Make it easy:

- Buy only wholegrain versions when you shop
- Try 50/50 pasta if pure wholegrain is too strong
- Have porridge for breakfast with flax seeds and berries - add a few walnuts for extra benefits
- Snack with wholegrain crackers and hummus

6.

PLANT POWER

Why it works: Vegetables and fruit are packed with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that support your body through menopause helping with bone health, sleep and mood. The fibre also helps with blood sugar management and keeps your digestive system healthy.

What to do:

- Fill at least half your plate with veg at lunch and dinner
- Explore leafy greens - spinach, kale, chard, lettuce, rocket
- Try lots of different types - broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, courgettes, mushrooms, tomatoes, cucumber, green beans, squash
- Aim for 5-10 portions daily

Simple Swaps:

- Crisps or biscuits ➡ Apple slices with nut butter
- Sugary breakfast ➡ Berries with yoghurt and flax seeds
- Chips as a side ➡ Roasted vegetables or salad
- Meat-heavy meals ➡ Add extra vegetables to bulk out dishes
- Fruit juice ➡ Whole fruit (keeps the fibre)

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TOP TIP: Berries are brilliant for menopause - they're rich in antioxidants and low in sugar. Frozen berries are very convenient, just as nutritious as fresh and often much cheaper!

Make it easy:

- Keep frozen berries for smoothies and porridge toppings
- Roast big tray of seasoned veg at the weekend to use all week as part of a salad or in a wrap
- Buy pre-chopped frozen vegetables for speed
- Add spinach or kale to curries, soups, and pasta
- Keep tinned tomatoes and frozen peas in stock
- Season your veg generously with olive oil, butter, garlic, chilli, spices - making your veg taste great means you will eat more of it

FOODS TO LIMIT

Some foods can make menopause symptoms worse:

- Refined sugar and white carbs** - Cause blood sugar spikes and crashes, leading to mood swings and cravings
- Caffeine** - May worsen hot flashes, anxiety, and sleep problems. Limit to 1-2 cups daily and avoid after 2pm
- Alcohol** - Triggers hot flashes, disrupts sleep, affects mood, and worsens bone density loss. Stick to recommended limits
- Spicy foods** - Can trigger hot flashes in some women. Keep a food diary to spot your personal triggers
- Very hot drinks** - Can trigger hot flashes. Let tea and coffee cool slightly before drinking

THE WEIGHT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

Many women find weight creeps on during menopause, especially around the middle. This happens because hormonal changes slow your metabolism and change where your body stores fat. What worked before menopause might not work now.

- Focus on protein at each meal** - Aim for 20-30g to maintain muscle mass (muscles burn more calories than fat)

- Choose high-fibre foods** - They keep you fuller for longer and help control blood sugar
- Watch portion sizes** - Your metabolism naturally slows, so you need slightly less food than before
- Stay active** - Combines with diet for best results, especially strength training

Research shows a Mediterranean-style diet works best for menopause weight management - plenty of vegetables, olive oil, oily fish, nuts and whole grains.



YOUR SUCCESS TIPS

- Start small:** Master one step before moving to the next. Even one change makes a difference!
- Make it visible:** Print this out and stick it on your fridge as a daily reminder.
- Tell someone:** Share your plan with family or a friend. Support helps!
- Slip-ups are normal:** Missed a day? No worries. Just start again tomorrow. It's about progress, not perfection.
- Be patient:** Not all symptoms changes immediately - stick with it!
- Celebrate wins:** Managed all 6 steps for a week? That's fantastic - treat yourself (but maybe not to a high salt or sugary snack!)

Remember: Your menopause symptoms respond to every positive change - even small steps, made daily, can have big impacts: Start today, keep going, and your future self will thank you.

“It’s not all or nothing. It’s all or something.”

For further advice and support visit:
pioneermedicalgroup.nhs.uk/patient-support-and-information/self-care/nutrition