

Menopause and your diet: Foods to choose and avoid

June 26 2023, by Sue Benzuly, RN



Menopause, a natural stage in a woman's life, brings a host of changes

and challenges. One aspect that is crucial to consider is nutrition.

Eating the right foods and avoiding others can help you navigate this change with vitality and optimal health.

This article will discuss the key foods to eat and those to avoid so you can thrive during menopause and beyond.

Diet and menopause

During menopause, which is the end of a woman's menstrual cycles, estrogen levels decrease and may lead to health issues.

Rate of bone loss speeds up, increasing your risk of low bone density, osteopenia and osteoporosis, according to the [Iowa Clinic](#). There's also a higher chance of having a [heart attack](#), stroke or other heart-related issues. Caffeine, sugar, salt, cigarettes and alcohol exacerbate these risks.

Body composition also changes during menopause; your lean body mass decreases while your percentage of [fat mass](#) increases by 1.7% per year, according to a 2021 article in [Nutrition in Menopausal Women: A Narrative Review](#), by [Dr. Poli Mara Spritzer](#), of Hospital de Clinicas de Porto Alegre in Brazil, and colleagues.

Menopause diet

Fortunately, you'll find help from a variety of common foods, from veggies to lean meats.

Foods to eat during menopause

For healthy bones, eat foods containing vitamin D and calcium:

- Broccoli
- Asparagus
- Cauliflower
- Brussels sprouts
- Sage
- Sesame seeds
- Dried figs
- Oily fish
- Eggs
- Nuts and seeds

Fiber will help you maintain your weight. The goal: Aim for 21 grams of fiber per day, according to [MedicineNet](#) :

- Pulses, such as beans, lentils or chickpeas
- Whole-grain cereals, oats or pasta
- Fresh whole fruit (not juice)
- Fresh vegetables
- Brown rice

Lean proteins can ease [menopausal symptoms](#) and help [maintain weight and build mass](#), so try:

- Tuna
- Tofu
- Grilled chicken
- Lean beef
- Beans
- Lentils
- Turkey

The [Cleveland Clinic](#) recommends the following foods to help manage menopausal symptoms:

Healthy fats high in omega-3 fatty acids

- Sardines
- Salmon
- Anchovies
- Flaxseeds
- Chia seeds
- Hemp seeds
- Avocados

These soy-based products contain phytoestrogens that help mimic biological estrogen:

- Tofu
- Soybeans (edamame)
- Soy milk
- Tempeh

Other phytoestrogen-rich foods include:

- Berries
- Oats
- Barley
- Carrots
- Apples
- Rice
- Sesame seeds
- Wheat
- Dried Beans
- Lentils
- Alfalfa
- Mung beans
- Wheat germ

Traditional Chinese medicine says certain cooling foods may help with menopause:

- Radish
- Cucumber
- Cabbage
- Bok choy
- Cauliflower
- Carrots
- Romaine lettuce
- Bananas
- Watermelon
- Pears
- Apples

Foods to avoid during menopause

To help maintain a healthy weight, limit these foods:

- Pasta (not whole grain)
- White bread
- Potatoes
- White rice
- Sugary drinks

These foods may cause menopausal symptoms to worsen:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Sugar, junk [food](#)
- Highly processed foods
- Caffeine

"The Mediterranean diet pattern, along with other healthy habits, may

help the primary prevention of bone, metabolic, and cardiovascular diseases in the postmenopausal period," Spritzer and her team said in the 2021 narrative review. "It consists of the use of healthy foods that have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, and is associated with a small but significant decrease in [blood pressure](#), reduction of fat mass, and improvement in cholesterol levels."

The [American Heart Association](#) notes that the Mediterranean-style diet typically includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, bread and other grains. Potatoes, beans, nuts and seeds are also included. Olive oil is the primary source of fat. The diet also includes low to moderate amounts of eggs, fish and poultry. Wine is usually consumed with meals in a low to reasonable amount. Fruit is common for desserts instead of sweets.

Listen to your body as you make changes to your diet to see what makes you feel your best. Nourishing your body with healthy foods can make [menopause](#) more manageable and make you feel better during this time.

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Citation: Menopause and your diet: Foods to choose and avoid (2023, June 26) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-menopause-diet-foods.html>

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