

# Importance of dietary changes and physical activity to mitigate weight gain during midlife

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Unwanted weight gain is a common problem associated with the menopause transition. Not only does it harm a woman's self-esteem, but

it is also associated with the development of heart disease, cancer, and declines in cognition and mental health. Tips for managing weight during midlife are provided as part of a presentation at the [2023 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society](#) in Philadelphia September 27–30.

Weight gain in midlife women is the result of changes related to aging, menopause, and lifestyle. As women age, they are likely to expend less energy because of a reduction in [physical activity](#) and a decrease in lean mass. As a double whammy, hormone changes characterized by decreased estrogen levels that are part of the [menopause transition](#) influence the distribution of body fat, contribute to increased central adiposity, and further exacerbate lean mass loss.

Weight gain and changes in body fat distribution have many negative health ramifications. They are especially hard on the heart and joints and have been shown to worsen other menopause symptoms.

But while [weight gain](#) is common in menopause, it is not inevitable. Dr. Maria Daniela Hurtado from the Mayo Clinic presents "The Skinny on Weight Management in Midlife" at meeting of The Menopause Society. As part of her presentation, Dr. Hurtado discusses the value of early counseling and anticipatory guidance on the importance of dietary changes and physical activity to mitigate weight gain during midlife.

"Comprehensive lifestyle interventions remain the backbone of any treatment plan for weight gain prevention or weight loss and should include medical nutrition therapy, exercise and behavioral interventions," says Dr. Hurtado.

According to Dr. Hurtado, there are special considerations relative to macronutrient dietary content and type of exercise for midlife women. She warns that, while effective, lifestyle modification-induced [weight loss](#) is often followed by weight regain due to compensatory changes in

appetite and energy expenditure. That's why there has been an increase in the use of anti-obesity medications and/or surgical interventions in conjunction with lifestyle changes.

"This is an important presentation as it will review a common issue raised by many women at midlife," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director for The Menopause Society. "Health care professionals can benefit by understanding the various approaches to weight management so they can share the latest findings with their patients."

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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