

Managing your heart health through menopause

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Women can help protect their heart health as they go through menopause.

The American Heart Association (AHA) offers some tips for protecting that most critical organ while [hormone levels](#) and body composition change.

"More women in the U.S. are living longer, and a significant portion of them will spend up to 40% of their lives postmenopausal," said Brooke Aggarwal, an assistant professor in cardiology at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City.

"Navigating through menopause isn't one-size-fits-all, and neither is the journey to good [heart health](#)," added Aggarwal, a volunteer for AHA's Go Red for Women movement.

"This makes it even more important to focus on heart and brain health at all stages of life," she said in an AHA news release.

The [best defense](#) against menopause-related changes is working with your doctor, according to the AHA.

It's important that key health numbers are in a healthy range.

Blood pressure, [blood sugar](#) and body mass index—a measure of body fat based on height and weight—should be monitored yearly. If your numbers are out of range, they should be monitored even more often.

Cholesterol level is also important. Healthy numbers are more individualized based on your other risk factors, which your doctor can help you figure out.

Your overall pattern of eating is also important.

Both the DASH and Mediterranean types of eating plans have the most heart-healthy elements. They are high in vegetables, fruit, whole grains,

healthy fat and lean protein. They're also low in salt, sugar, alcohol and processed foods.

Exercise is also important. Strength and [resistance training](#), endurance, balance and flexibility make for a well-rounded routine.

Strength and resistance have the added benefit of increasing [bone strength](#) and muscle mass, according to the heart association.

As women enter menopause, their bone density is affected. Body composition tends to shift to lower muscle mass. Strength training at least twice a week can help both bones and muscles.

It's also important to prioritize sleep.

In menopause, many symptoms can affect a good night's sleep. These include night sweats, insomnia and getting up to go to the bathroom. But if you manage to get enough rest, you'll have a stronger immune system, better mood, more energy, clearer thinking and lower risk of chronic diseases.

Setting an alarm to remind you it's time to wind down can help. Shut down all electronic devices at that time. Call your doctor if you're still having trouble.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Aging has more on [menopause](#).

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