

Nutrition and Menopause: Nourishing Your Body Through Change

How Does Nutrition Affect the Menopausal Transition?

Menopause is a natural life stage marked by hormonal changes that can affect metabolism, sleep, mood, and overall well-being. Symptoms like hot flashes, night sweats, and fatigue may disrupt daily life. A well-balanced diet can help manage symptoms and reduce the risk of chronic diseases, including osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline.

Research supports **plant-predominant nutrition patterns** to improve menopause-related symptoms, maintain muscle and bone health, and support mental well-being.[1] Key dietary patterns such as the whole-food, plant-predominant diet, the Mediterranean Diet, and the MIND Diet emphasize nutrient-dense foods that reduce inflammation, support hormone health, and promote longevity.

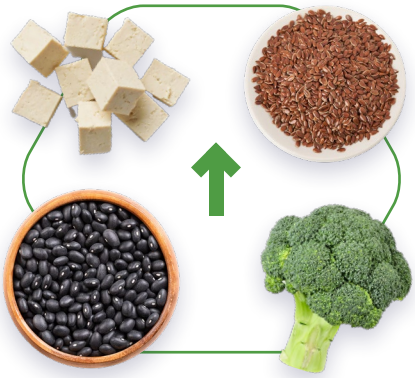


What Can You Do?

1

POTENTIALLY REDUCE HOT FLASHES WITH NUTRIENT-RICH FOODS[2]

Phytoestrogens are plant compounds that mimic estrogen in the body and may help reduce the frequency and severity of hot flashes.[2]





Foods to include:

- **Soy-based foods:** Tempeh, tofu, miso, and edamame
- **Flaxseeds & lignan-rich foods:** Ground flaxseeds, sesame seeds, berries
- **Legumes:** Lentils, chickpeas, black beans
- **Cruciferous vegetables:** Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale

Foods/drinks to limit:

Spicy foods, alcohol and excessive caffeine - though evidence is limited, these are commonly thought to worsen hot flashes and night sweats. Work with your clinician to track your symptoms related to these foods so you know how they impact you.

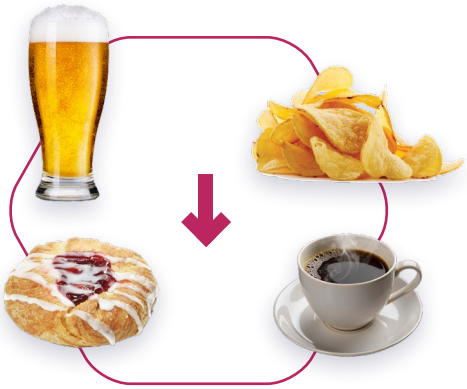
Tip: **Find examples and cooking demonstrations of health-supporting foods here: bit.ly/culinary-medicine-curriculum**

2

IMPROVE SLEEP WITH SMART NUTRITION PRACTICES[3]

Sleep disturbances are common during menopause, often due to hormonal changes, night sweats, and anxiety. What you eat—and when—can impact melatonin production, digestion, and sleep cycles.





Foods to support better sleep:

- **Tryptophan-rich foods:** Oats, pumpkin seeds, tofu, and almonds
- **Magnesium-rich foods:** Leafy greens, avocados, bananas, and dark chocolate
- **Complex carbohydrates:** Quinoa, brown rice, farro, wheat, berries, and lentils (help stabilize blood sugar)

Foods that may disrupt sleep:

- High fat, fried, and sugary foods may cause blood sugar spikes and inflammation.
- Alcohol & caffeine can disrupt deep sleep and worsen night sweats.

Tip: **Aim to enjoy your largest meal earlier in the day and opt for a lighter fare 2–3 hours before bedtime to support restful sleep.**



3

SUPPORT BONE HEALTH[1]

Estrogen plays a key role in bone remodeling, and its decline increases the risk of osteoporosis and fractures. Maintaining strong bones requires calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin K2.



Bone-strengthening foods:

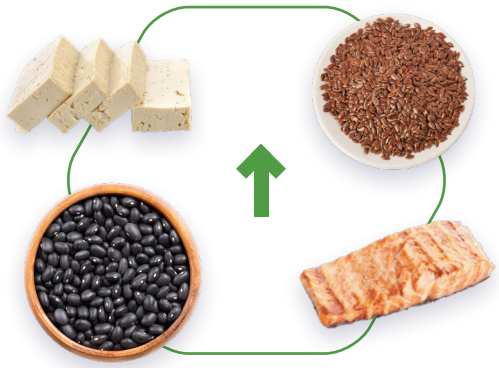
- **Calcium-rich sources:** Fortified plant-based milks, leafy greens, tahini, white beans
- **Vitamin D sources:** Sun exposure, fortified milks, and supplements
- **Vitamin K2 sources:** Fermented foods like sauerkraut, kimchi, natto, and supplements

Tip: **Pairing nutrition with resistance training and weight-bearing activity helps protect bone health during and after the menopausal transition.**

4

MAINTAIN STRENGTH AND A HEALTHY METABOLISM[1]

As estrogen declines, muscle mass often decreases and abdominal fat increases, leading to potential weight gain and reduced strength. A higher protein, plant-predominant eating pattern paired with regular strength training can help preserve muscle mass and support metabolism.



Protein-rich foods for muscle health:

- **Legumes and beans:** Lentils, chickpeas, black beans
- **Soy-based proteins:** Tofu, tempeh, edamame, soy milk
- **Nuts & seeds:** Chia, flax, hemp, almonds
- **Optional occasional inclusion of seafood*:** Salmon, oysters

***Note:** Several types of fish should be avoided due to unsafe levels of mercury, visit ewg.org/consumer-guides/ewgs-consumer-guide-seafood for more information.

Tip: Distribute protein evenly across meals to maximize muscle-building benefits.

5

HEART-HEALTHY EATING FOR MENOPAUSAL WOMEN[4,5]

After menopause, shifts in cholesterol, blood pressure, and arterial function raise the risk of cardiovascular disease. This life stage is an opportunity to support heart health through a way of eating that is rich in fiber, antioxidants, and healthy fats.



Foods for heart health:

- **Whole grains:** Oats, brown rice, quinoa
- **Antioxidant-rich fruits & veggies:** Berries, citrus fruits, tomatoes
- **Omega-3s:** walnuts, ground flaxseeds, chia seeds, and hemp seeds, optional occasional intake of seafood (salmon or oysters)

Foods to limit:

Processed foods high in added sugars, saturated and trans fats.

Tip: **Plant-predominant diets, like the Mediterranean Diet, are linked to better heart health and reduced inflammation.**

6

ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE: WHAT TO WATCH FOR[1]

Substances like alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine can worsen menopause symptoms.

- **Alcohol:** Increases the risk of hot flashes, sleep disruption, and breast cancer.
- **Caffeine:** Can trigger hot flashes, anxiety, and sleep disturbances.

Tip: **Try decaffeinated teas, fruit-infused water or sparkling water instead of caffeine or alcohol.**



ACLM'S DIETARY POSITION STATEMENT:

For the treatment, reversal, and prevention of lifestyle-related chronic disease, ACLM recommends an eating plan based predominantly on a variety of minimally processed vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds.



The Best Dietary Patterns for Menopause[1]

ACLM's dietary position statement is reflected in the specific diets listed below that have been shown to support women during menopause. These diets emphasize plant-predominant foods rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals to reduce inflammation and support heart health.

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET:

Rich in healthy fats, fiber, and antioxidants to support heart and brain health.

THE DASH DIET:

(Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Emphasizes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins to help lower blood pressure and reduce heart disease risk.

THE MIND DIET:

A hybrid of Mediterranean and DASH diets, shown to reduce cognitive decline.



Final Tips for Nourishing Yourself Through Menopause[1]

HYDRATE:

Drink plenty of water to support digestion, skin hydration, and temperature regulation.

EAT MINDFULLY:

Slow down, chew well, and enjoy balanced meals to prevent blood sugar spikes.

PLAN MEALS:

Stock your kitchen with whole, nutrient-dense foods to make healthy eating easier.