

The Role of Lifestyle Medicine in Menopausal Health

Factsheet 1: Healthy Eating in Midlife & Menopause

These factsheets are based on the IMS White Paper *The Role of Lifestyle Medicine in Menopausal Health: A Review of Non-Pharmacologic Interventions (2025)*. They share clear, practical information on six key areas of lifestyle medicine; healthy eating, physical activity, mental wellbeing, avoidance of risky substances, restorative sleep and healthy relationships, to support health and wellbeing during and after menopause.



World Menopause Day is held every year on 18 October.

Founded by the International Menopause Society (IMS) in 2009, it is a global awareness day that shines a spotlight on the challenges facing women during the menopause transition and highlights advances in research, education, and resources.

As the founder of World Menopause Day, IMS sets the annual theme, commissions and publishes the White Paper, and creates resources to support women, healthcare professionals, and communities worldwide.



Healthy Eating in Midlife & Menopause

Why it matters

Healthy eating plays a key role in how women experience menopause and in protecting long-term health. During midlife, hormonal changes can affect weight, body composition, heart health, and bone strength. The right dietary choices can help manage symptoms, reduce disease risk, and support overall wellbeing.

Global picture

Around the world, malnutrition, including both undernutrition and obesity, is a major health challenge. Poor diets contribute billions each year to the burden of heart disease, diabetes, and other conditions.

A healthy diet should be nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, and environmentally sustainable. This means focusing on plant-based foods, limiting red and processed meat, and reducing added sugars.



Diet & health



Healthier diets are linked with lower risks of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers.



Ultra-processed foods (such as packaged snacks, sugary drinks, and fast food) are associated with higher risks of heart disease, mental health issues, and early death.



In midlife women, diet interacts with other factors like blood pressure, sleep, and smoking to shape overall health.

Dietary patterns to consider



Mediterranean diet:

The best-studied approach, rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, and fish. Linked with better mood, weight control, heart health, and lower cholesterol.

DASH diet:

Similar to the Mediterranean diet but with a stronger focus on reducing salt, making it especially effective for lowering blood pressure.

Vegetarian or vegan diets:

Plant-based diets overlap with the benefits of the Mediterranean and DASH diets and may help protect against some cancers and neurodegenerative diseases.

Intermittent fasting:

Can improve metabolism, blood pressure, and cholesterol in the short term, but its long-term benefits and sustainability remain uncertain.

Other important impacts



Weight and body composition: Diets like the Mediterranean diet can reduce abdominal (central) obesity. Benefits are greater when combined with physical activity and healthy fats such as olive oil.



Bone health: Calcium (700–1200 mg/day) and vitamin D (400–1000 IU/day) are essential after menopause to support bone strength and reduce fracture risk.



Menopausal symptoms: Diets rich in fruits and vegetables may help ease hot flushes and night sweats for some women. Evidence on soy is mixed - some find it helpful, others notice little effect.

Key takeaway

Healthy eating is one of the most powerful ways to support your body during and after menopause. Focusing on whole, plant-rich foods, getting enough calcium and vitamin D, and reducing processed foods can make a real difference in improving symptoms, energy levels, and long-term health.

Small, consistent, sustainable changes are more effective than quick fixes - every positive step counts.



What you can do: lifestyle strategies that work

- ☐ Choose a Mediterranean-style diet with vegetables, fruit, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, and fish.
- ☐ Include calcium-rich foods daily and monitor your vitamin D intake after menopause.
- ☐ Cut back on ultra-processed foods like sugary drinks and packaged snacks.
- ☐ Add more plant-based meals for heart, bone, and weight benefits.
- ☐ Try soy foods if you wish - some women find they help with hot flashes.

Additional Resources

Combine healthy eating with regular physical activity to help manage weight and protect your heart.

Read the Physical Activity factsheet for more guidance.





The International Menopause Society hopes these factsheets will provide useful, trustworthy guidance to support conversations with healthcare professionals, families, and communities.

Together, we can continue to improve understanding of menopause and ensure women worldwide have access to the care and support they deserve.

Access all World Menopause Day factsheets on Lifestyle Medicine in Menopausal Health online at worldmenopauseday.com

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