

The Role of Lifestyle Medicine in Menopausal Health

Factsheet 2: Physical Activity and 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.



Physical Activity and Menopause

Staying physically active is one of the most effective ways to protect health, manage symptoms, and maintain quality of life during and after menopause.

Why it matters

During menopause, falling estrogen levels can lead to changes such as increased abdominal fat, inflammation, reduced muscle mass, and a slower metabolism. At the same time, many women become less active during midlife, which can make these effects worse.



Benefits of physical activity

Regular movement supports both physical and mental wellbeing. It can:



Improve cardiovascular health, body composition, and bone strength.



Reduce inflammation by boosting natural antioxidants in the body.



Ease vasomotor symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats by improving the body's ability to regulate temperature.



Support better sleep, mood, and mental health, helping women feel stronger and more resilient.

Types of exercise

Different types of exercise play different roles, and the best results often come from combining them:



Aerobic (endurance) exercise:

Activities like walking, running, or cycling improve heart health, circulation, body composition, and help lower blood pressure and fat mass.

Resistance (strength) training:

Using weights, resistance bands, or doing yoga, or tai chi builds lean muscle, increases bone density, lowers blood pressure, and improves insulin sensitivity.

Multi-component training:

Combining aerobic and resistance exercise; for example high-intensity interval training (HIIT) or mixed routines, provides the greatest benefits for vasomotor symptoms, inflammation, strength, flexibility, and fat reduction.

Exercise and Menopause Hormone Therapy (MHT)

There is some evidence that MHT can enhance the benefits of exercise on metabolism and vascular health. Over the long term, combining MHT with aerobic exercise may help maintain arterial flexibility, but findings are mixed.

Recommendations

Health organisations recommend:



American Heart Association: 150–300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75–150 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week, plus at least two days of resistance training.



International Menopause Society: At least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity plus two or more days of resistance or strength training each week.

Key takeaway

Exercise is one of the most powerful tools to counteract the effects of estrogen loss during menopause.

A consistent, multi-component approach, combining aerobic and strength training, supports heart, bone, metabolic, and mental health.

The best exercise is the one you enjoy and can keep up regularly, even small amounts make a meaningful difference.



What you can do: lifestyle strategies that work



Aim for 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise (e.g. brisk walking, cycling) each week.



Include at least 2 days of strength training to protect bones and maintain muscle.



Mix aerobic, resistance, and stretching exercises for the greatest benefits.



Break up long periods of sitting with short walks or stretches.



Choose activities you enjoy to make exercise easier to keep up.

Additional Resources

Exercise also improves sleep and mood.

Read the Restorative Sleep and Mental Wellbeing & Stress factsheets to learn more.





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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