

10 Tips for Keeping Healthy Through Your Menopause Years

Although menopause can bring unexpected physical and emotional changes, it is a gateway to the second half of life - a chance to reflect on the past - and plan for your future.

Here are some ideas that other women have found useful.

1) **Treat your body as well as you can – it's the only one you'll get!**

- Make time to eat well. Use fresh foods, not precooked meals where possible - as packaged, frozen and tinned meals usually have a high salt, sugar or fat content.
- Keep low on sugar, salt and fat, and eat mainly fish or fowl rather than red meat.
- Eat oily fish regularly or Omega 3 supplements to protect heart and joints.
- Keep low on sweet things, fat and carbohydrates (bread, biscuits, cakes, potatoes, rice, pasta, pizza, etc) if you need to lose some weight. Keeping your weight down will reduce bloating, blood pressure, wear and tear on joints – and will make you feel better.
- Drink several glasses of plain tap water daily to help the body get rid of toxins naturally.
- Eat at least 5 servings of fruit and veg daily (not including potatoes) – some uncooked to get the vitamin C.
- Keep calcium levels high with 3 daily servings of low fat dairy products/ fish with edible bones / tofu / green leafy veg.

2) **If you smoke keep trying until you stop!** This is the most helpful thing you can do to live longer and enjoy life more. Use your GP or other local Stop Smoking services e.g. Live Life Better Derbyshire <https://www.livelifebetterderbyshire.org.uk/>

3) **Keep your alcohol intake low**, as it causes hot flushes and can make your memory and concentration worse. If you know you are drinking too much – get help.

4) **Protect your bones and heart by doing exercise** that you like for the equivalent of getting puffed for 20-30 mins 5 times per week. Choose exercise where you take your weight on your feet – if not jogging or Zumba then fast walking or dancing round the living room is fine! Swimming, Yoga, Pilates, T'ai Chi etc. can help with suppleness, strength and relaxation.

5) **Find out what makes you feel really relaxed and clear space for this every day** eg. music, walking, gardening, bath with candles, family time, reading, relaxation audios or videos.

Plan how to relax or have fun when you have half an hour, or half a day free, and get away for short breaks when you need to, with family, friends – or on your own. Time on your own to do what you want to do can be really special and help recharge your batteries.

6) Sort out your life –

- Only do what you **really** want to do or what **has** to be done if your energy is low.
- Don't waste your time and energy on people or things that you no longer like.
- Practice saying '**NO**' more often! If you can't say '**NO**' when you want to - get help from friends, family, assertiveness class or a professional counsellor.
- Pruning out 'dead wood' from your life will make space for things which may lead to a new career, voluntary work, friendships or hobbies.
- Ask for help from others at home or at work if, and when, you need to - share the load!
- Do seek professional help if you start feeling really low or depressed.

7) **Spend time quietly thinking about what you really want from the second half of your life** and start planning how you could make some of your dreams a reality. Many women discover a new connection to the spirit and creativity at this stage of life and feel the need to spend time nurturing this aspect of life in whatever way feels true to themselves – either on their own or with others.

8) **Find out about menopause changes and talk things through with an experienced health professional** at your GPs or a Specialist Menopause Clinic.

As your hormones are changing in an unpredictable pattern from the age of 40 or so, the years before periods stop are often the most difficult emotionally and physically. Discuss the use of HRT for a few years if you are struggling with your menopause symptoms after altering your lifestyle. Most women can take it safely apart from after breast cancer and it can help a lot with specific menopausal symptoms. Request a bone density scan if you have a high risk of osteoporosis, eg. long-term use of cortico-steroids, family history, heavy smoker, poor diet, fewer periods due to anorexia or menopause before the age of 45.

9) **If you have bad hot flushes - try wearing several layers of clothes and avoid hot and spicy drinks and foods – and hassles where possible!**

Flushes are often only severe for a few months – but may last for many years.

If night sweats are a problem have a towel and change of nightie and sheets ready and arrange a comfy bed to move to if restless or disturbed by a snoring partner. Try different earplugs until you find some that work.

Fatigue is very common. Try a short nap in the day or deep muscle relaxation for 10 mins. Insomnia is also a menopause symptom - and improves on HRT and some complementary therapies.

10) **Read up or ask for advice about complementary or alternative therapies which could make your life easier** e.g. Acupuncture, Medical Herbalism etc.

Always choose a fully registered practitioner as 'natural' is not always safe!

Websites on Menopause symptoms – Self-help and Treatments:

www.menopausematters.co.uk

www.womens-health-concern.org e.g. factsheet on CBT for flushes and sleep problems

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/resources/menopause-718895758021>

Books on the Menopause

Is it me, or is it hot in here? Jenni Murray. Easy to read - well balanced

The Change before the Change – staying healthy in the decade before the menopause. Dr Laura Cono & Linda Kahn

Managing Hot Flushes and Night Sweats: A cognitive behavioural self-help guide to the menopause, Myra Hunter and Melanie Smith. Comprehensive self help guide