

Menopause and cancer: top tips

Menopause starts when the ovaries produce less eggs, resulting in less oestrogen production and your periods stopping. Menopause may be triggered by cancer treatment and there are different ways [symptoms](#) can be reduced and managed.

The nutrition approach:

Eat to support blood sugar and energy levels

- Include protein (e.g. fish, meat, pulses) and healthy fats (e.g. nuts) in meals and snacks
- Opt for high-fibre carbohydrates (e.g. sweet potato, brown rice, oats, barley, quinoa, wholegrain cereals, bread, and pasta)
- Limit food and drinks high in added sugars - consider them as occasional treats

Cardiovascular health

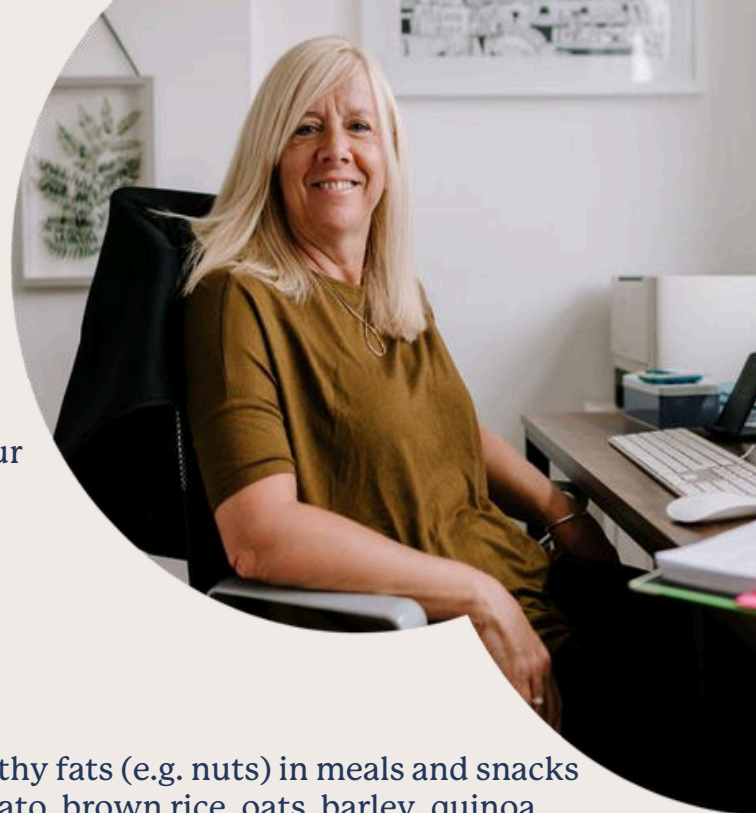
- Increase your intake of omega-3 fats. Oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines) are the best source of omega-3. Plant sources of omega-3 include flaxseed, chia seed, hemp and walnuts
- Get more fibre and plant protein - eat vegetables, fruits, beans, lentils and wholegrains to increase potassium and swap animal proteins for plant proteins to help lower saturated fat
- Watch your salt intake - herbs and spices are a great way to add flavour to dishes and offer a healthy alternative to salt. Check out [this guide](#) for ideas and inspiration

Bone health

- Include calcium-rich foods - dairy, tinned fish (with soft edible bones, e.g. sardines), tahini, sesame seeds, soybeans, lentils, almonds, green leafy vegetables
- Magnesium and vitamin D are important for bone health. Magnesium-rich foods include green leafy vegetables, nuts, seeds, lentils and whole grains. The best dietary sources of vitamin D are oily fish, egg yolks, red meat, liver and fortified foods such as some breakfast cereals. We also create vitamin D from direct sunlight on our skin during the spring and summer months. NHS advice is that everyone should consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement during the autumn and winter. [Further information on Vitamin D is available here.](#)
- Consume nourishing sources of protein such as chickpeas, beans, lentils, tofu, nuts, seeds, eggs, yoghurt, fish, and chicken

The movement approach:

- Movement is good for us: the right movement helps our mood and our energy levels. Maintaining full range of movement in our joints is important. Try something simple to begin with like going for a gentle walk or joining a yoga class
- Resistance and strength exercises are key: we lose bone density and muscle mass around menopause, performing resistance and body weight exercises can help reverse muscle loss – keeping you stronger and less likely to have issues with bone density
- Pace yourself around exercise and activity, build yourself up gradually. Aim for a moderate intensity where you feel slightly out of breath
- Your pelvic floor is a muscle too – it needs exercise to move optimally and stay strong. [Further information is available here.](#)



The integrative doctor approach:

- Everyone's experience of menopause is different, and your symptoms may be [similar to cancer symptoms or treatment side effects](#). Speak to family, friends, and professionals about your symptoms, or [find a local support group](#)
- Different cancer types and treatments may react differently to hormone replacement therapies. Speak to your cancer specialist or book a one-to-one with one of our integrative doctors
- Complementary therapy (e.g. reflexology, massage or [acupuncture](#)) can bring balance back to body and mind, improve sleep, help reduce stress, and help manage some of the side-effects of menopause, such as hot flushes
- A combination of approaches can often work better than a single intervention. Some approaches may need more time to have an effect than others
- Fertility can be affected by both cancer treatment and the menopause. Speak to your partner or GP about [options which may be beneficial for you](#)
- [Genital and urinary symptoms can be treated](#). Speak to your GP (ideally one with an interest in menopause)

The wellbeing approach:

- Using our breath is a [powerful way to help with symptoms](#). Take a few slow breaths - in through the nose and out through the mouth. This will steer you away from the body's stress response and guide you towards the relaxation response
- Do something every day to nourish yourself. This could be a walk in nature, a soak in the bath, listening to music, reading a book or chatting to friends
- Engaging in a hobby or skill can keep your mind active and [help combat brain fog](#)
- Different [approaches](#) can be effective for different symptoms. Be open to trying several [treatments and therapies](#) to see what works for you, this may be an ongoing process

The most powerful ways of bringing balance to the mind are often the simplest and most accessible: using the breath, being mindful, moving more, eating well, and talking to others. And don't worry if you have never done anything like this before. Start off simply and small, find the right thing that works for you.

- Penny Brohn UK Resource Suite - <https://pennybrohn.org.uk/our-approach/resources/>
- Menopause and cancer: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/menopausal-symptoms-and-cancer-treatment>
- Menopause and diet: <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/menopause-diet.html>
- Menopause and bone health: <https://theros.org.uk/blog/2021-03-22-what-s-the-menopause-got-to-do-with-bone-health/>

