



In Good Health Newsletter, September



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National Menopause Awareness
Reasons For Feeling Sleepy All The Time

Menopause 101

Menopause is defined as the final menstrual period and is usually confirmed when a woman has missed her period for 12 consecutive months (with no other obvious causes). Menopause results in lower levels of estrogen and other hormones. It is a normal, natural life event that all women experience if they live long enough.

Common Body Changes At Menopause

- Body Changes At Menopause
- Stop Weight Gain At Menopause
- What Really Causes Midlife Weight Gain
- Activities to do During Menopause
- Reasons For Feeling Sleepy All The Time
- Quick Chicken Minestrone

- Most women experience menopause between the ages 40 - 58. The average age is 51.
- Physical changes begin years before the final menstrual period. This transition phase is called **peri-menopause** and may last 4 - 8 years. It begins with changes in the length of time between periods and ends 1 year after the final period.
- **Induced menopause** is when a women's menstrual periods ends due to medical intervention, particularly surgical removal of both ovaries, or cancer treatments such as chemotherapy or pelvic radiation.
- **Smoking** and genetics are two factors that can affect the timing of natural menopause. Smokers reach menopause about 2 years earlier.

- **Hot flashes** are the most common menopause-related discomfort. They involve a sudden wave of heat or warmth often accompanied by sweating, reddening of the skin, and rapid heart beat. They usually last 1 to 5 minutes. Hot flashes frequently are followed by a cold chill.
Night sweats are hot flashes at night that interfere with sleep. While it's a myth that menopause itself makes women irritable, the sleep disturbances that stem from hot flashes and night sweats can certainly make a woman irritable. Treatments for night sweats and hot flashes include lifestyle changes, nonprescription remedies, hormone therapy (with estrogen plus progestogen, or estrogen alone for women without a uterus), and nonhormonal prescription drugs.
- The drop in estrogen around menopause leads to vaginal atrophy (the drying and thinning of vaginal tissues) in many women. It can cause a feeling of vaginal tightness during [sex](#) along with pain, burning, or soreness. Over-the-counter vaginal lubricants and moisturizers are effective in relieving pain during intercourse. For women with more severe vaginal atrophy and related pain, low-dose vaginal estrogen products may be needed.

menopause.org

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How to Stop Weight Gain During Menopause



What Causes Weight Gain During Menopause?

Researchers have studied the link between weight gain and menopause. [Many studies](#) have confirmed that menopausal and postmenopausal women are likely to gain weight and have larger midsections than women who have not gone through menopause. But the reason why this weight gain occurs is not clear.

One research study published in the [American Journal of Epidemiology](#) questions how different factors such as age, menopause, and lifestyle changes account for the weight gain often experienced by midlife women. They studied the activity levels of over 3000 women across the country. **They found that by [remaining active](#), many women prevented weight gain.**

In another [study](#) where both men and women were studied over the course of 20 years, researchers found that those who maintained a [very high level of physical activity](#) experienced smaller increases in [BMI](#) and [waist circumference](#).

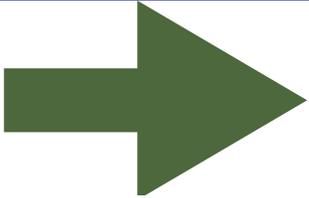


What Really Causes Midlife Weight Gain?

In addition to the [hormonal changes](#) that happen in women's bodies during middle age, consider some of the other life changes that often occur.

- Kids move away from home
- Decreased workload around the house
- Retirement
- Increased travel
- Increased interest in leisure activities
- Increased time for social activities such as cooking / entertaining / dining out

Not every person will experience these changes, but many of them result in a decrease in our overall physical activity level. When our physical activity level decreases, so does our [metabolism](#). This pattern has led some researchers to wonder if [weight gain](#) occurs because of a change in lifestyle rather than a change in our hormones.



To achieve [weight loss](#) or to prevent [weight gain](#) during menopause, [stay active](#) and eat a [healthy diet](#).

If your lifestyle begins to change as you age, try to keep [physical activity](#) and [portion control](#) at the top of your priority list.

- When kids move away from home, [use your extra time to exercise](#). [Join a gym](#), organize a hiking or walking group, or learn a new sport.
- If you have more time to entertain, learn a few [healthy cooking tips](#) and share low-calorie, low-fat meals [with friends and family](#).
- Travel and leisure activities can include exercise. Many travel companies specialize in active vacations. Instead of laying on the beach, bike, hike, or paddle through your favorite tropical destination.

Can Hormone Replacement Therapy Stop Weight Gain?

- Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is the use of prescription [estrogen](#), progesterone or testosterone to reduce menopausal symptoms.
- In some women, hormone replacement therapy has prevented weight gain. But HRT is also associated with side effects, such as an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.
- If you would like to consider hormone replacement therapy, speak to your health care provider. Together with your physician, you can determine the best treatment for your menopausal symptoms.



Activities to do During Menopause

Why Exercise is Important

Though frequent workouts haven't been proven as a means of reducing menopausal symptoms, they *can* ease the transition by helping to relieve stress and enhance your overall quality of life. Regular exercise is also an excellent way to stave off weight gain and loss of muscle mass—two frequent side effects of menopause. Most healthy women should aim for at least **150 minutes** of moderate aerobic activity or **75 minutes** of vigorous aerobic activity a week, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Cardio

Aerobic activity that makes use of your large muscle groups while keeping up your heart rate is a good thing. Your options for cardio are limitless: **walking, jogging, biking, and swimming** all count. The CDC recommends that beginners start with 10 minutes of light activity, slowly boosting exercise intensity as it becomes easier.

Strength Training

Because osteoporosis risk skyrockets following menopause (estrogen is needed to help lay down bone), strength training is especially vital. Strength training exercises will help to build bone and muscle strength, burn body fat, and rev your metabolism. At home, opt for dumbbell sand resistance tubing. In the gym, choose from weight machines or free weights. Select a level that is heavy enough to tax your muscles in 12 repetitions and progress from there

Zumba

Do you prefer to be around people when you work out? Join a group class at the gym. Zumba is a popular dance program that has swept up nearly 12 million devoted fans in the past decade. Incorporating salsa, merengue, and other Latin-inspired music, Zumba works for people of all ages. Burn calories and work your muscles, all while moving to uplifting Latin beats.

Dancing

Exercise shouldn't be entirely hard work. Packing a calorie-burning cardio session into your routine can be fun and good for your body. If running on a treadmill isn't your thing, consider a dance class. Dance can help to build muscle and keep you flexible. Look for a style that suits you: jazz, ballet, ballroom, or salsa.

Elliptical or Stairmaster

Don't forget: machines like the elliptical or the Stairmaster count as cardio workouts too. If you don't want to hit the pavement, hit the gym to get in your cardio sessions. The American Heart Association (AHA) reports that as you enter menopause, your risks for cardiovascular disease (CVD) significantly increase. Estrogen levels, which are thought to protect your heart, drop during menopause. Knowing the risk factors and embracing a healthy lifestyle can keep your heart healthy.

Vigorous House or Yard Work

Half-hearted dusting doesn't exactly count, but vigorous house or yard work that elevates your heart rate and utilizes your larger muscle groups like quads, glutes, and your core does! This form of aerobic activity will serve you well. If you're a beginner, start with 10 minutes of light activity, slowly boosting physical intensity as it becomes easier.

Be Realistic

Set realistic, attainable, and specific goals to avoid frustration. Don't simply declare, "I'm going to exercise more." Tell yourself: "I'll walk for 30 minutes at lunch three days a week, take a group cycling class, and play tennis with a friend." Recruit a friend or spouse as a workout buddy to help keep you motivated and accountable.

Get Creative

Don't forget to exercise your creativity. Take a painting art class or join a knitting group to engage in a creative new activity that will give you a sense of achievement and satisfaction and help take your mind off of annoying symptoms.

Reasons For Feeling Sleepy All The Time



If you always have trouble staying awake during the daytime, suffer from excessive daytime [sleepiness](#) or drowsiness, easily doze off, take [naps](#) on a regular basis, and have difficulty with attention or concentration, you may wonder: Why do I feel sleepy all the time? Some sleep disorders, such as [insomnia](#), make it so you can't sleep, while many others result in poor sleep quality. Discover seven common reasons for feeling or being too sleepy during the daytime, including the most common sleep disorder causes affecting sleep quality such as sleep apnea and narcolepsy.

Poor Sleep Habits

The most common cause of always feeling too sleepy or drowsy during the daytime might be the most obvious: you are simply not getting enough sleep at night. You may not know exactly [how much sleep you need](#). And if you do know, [you may choose to not sleep enough](#) because of work or social obligations, which is sometimes called sleep restriction. You could be trying to sleep in a poor [sleep environment](#), such as leaving the television on at night, that is not conducive to sound sleep. You may have a horrible bedtime routine that does not prepare you well to fall asleep. You may also fail to follow any of the other [simple guidelines to improve your sleep](#), such as avoiding caffeine and alcohol near bedtime. Any and all of these things may leave you too sleepy the next day, without any specific sleep disorder as the cause.

Sleep Apnea

[Sleep apnea](#) is a condition in which you repeatedly partially or completely stop breathing while asleep. This may result in witnessed pauses followed by a loud snort and brief awakening as you gasp for air. It can occur dozens or even a hundred times per hour of sleep. With each awakening, you shift briefly into lighter [stages of sleep](#). You may wake completely and fall back asleep without remembering it. This disruption leads to sleep fragmentation and poor quality sleep and results in significant excessive daytime sleepiness. People with severe sleep apnea are at increased risk for falling asleep while driving. increased risk for falling asleep while driving.

[Upper airway resistance syndrome \(UARS\)](#) is a similar condition in which the breathing disturbances are less pronounced during sleep. There are also serious health consequences to sleep apnea, so treatment such as the use of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy or the use of an oral appliance, should be pursued.

Narcolepsy

There are four defining [symptoms of narcolepsy](#), the least specific being excessive sleepiness. This sleep disorder occurs when there is a problem with the regulation of sleep and wakefulness. Therefore, characteristics of sleep may suddenly occur while awake (such as paralysis) and elements of wakefulness may intrude upon sleep. The most characteristic symptom of narcolepsy is cataplexy, which is the sudden loss of muscle tone with an emotional stimulus such as surprise or laughter. The sleepiness associated with [narcolepsy](#) may require treatment with stimulants such as [Ritalin](#), Provigil, and [Nuvigil](#).

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Reasons For Feeling Sleepy All The Time

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Chronic fatigue syndrome is a condition that might make you feel tired, exhausted, or sleepy. It is characterized by worsened fatigue that occurs after exertion, associated with unrefreshing sleep and often joint and muscle pains. Although the [cause](#) of chronic fatigue syndrome is not completely understood and may be due to subtle sleep apnea, it can lead to significant impairment and disruption of the affected person's life.

Kleine - Levin Syndrome

Although quite rare, [Kleine-Levin syndrome](#) is a condition that may affect young adults and can cause recurrent episodes of excessive sleepiness. These episodes can last for days, weeks, or even months at a time. The sleepiness can be incapacitating. It often interferes with school attendance and basic daily functions. There may be associated symptoms, such as hallucinations or hypersexual or compulsive behaviors. The only treatment known to be beneficial in the treatment of Kleine-Levin syndrome is the mood stabilizer called lithium, though it has mixed benefits in some studies.

Restless Leg Syndrome

Disorders that cause excessive movements during sleep may lead you to feel sleepy the next day. The most common condition is often linked to [restless legs syndrome](#) (RLS). This disorder is characterized by an uncomfortable sensation in the legs associated with an urge to move that often develops in the evening as you are lying down to rest and is relieved by movement.

The commonly associated condition, called [periodic limb movement syndrome \(PLMS\)](#), is diagnosed when there are sudden jerking movements that occur during sleep. These may be repetitive and disturb the sleep of the affected person as well as potentially disrupting the sleep of their bed partner. There are effective treatments available for these conditions, depending on the underlying cause.



Circadian Rhythm Disorder

Various [circadian rhythm disorders](#) may leave you feeling too sleepy. The circadian rhythm is the body's natural clock that helps to coordinate your activities to the timing of light and dark in your environment. If this timing is misaligned, you may find yourself sleepy at inappropriate times. For example, if you have [advanced sleep phase syndrome](#), you will feel sleepy in the evening. Conversely, with [delayed sleep phase syndrome](#), you will have difficulty falling asleep (or insomnia) and feel sleepy in the morning. People with the first condition are called morning larks and those with the second condition are called night owls. Fortunately, there are effective treatments like light therapy and the use of melatonin for these and other circadian rhythm conditions, including jet lag and seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

Quick Chicken Minestrone

This quirky twist on the classic recipe is a perfect combination of the hearty vegetable minestrone soups of your childhood and comforting chicken noodle soup. We love the alphabet shape noodles, which encourage pint-sized palates to enjoy their dinner. Pair this soup recipe with a garlic bread for the best of cool weather flavor.



Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup diced yellow onion
- 1 cup diagonally sliced carrot
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons unsalted tomato paste
- 4 cups unsalted chicken stock (such as Swanson)
- 1 cup water
- 5/8 teaspoon kosher salt
- 5 ounces uncooked alphabet or ditalini pasta (about 1 cup)
- 1 cup diagonally sliced sugar snap peas
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh tomato
- 6 ounces skinless, boneless rotisserie chicken breast, shredded (about 1 1/2 cups)

How to Make

Heat a large Dutch oven over medium-high. Add oil to pan; swirl to coat. Add onion and carrot; sauté 4 minutes. Add garlic and tomato paste; cook 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add stock, 1 cup water, and salt; bring to a boil. Add pasta to pan; cook 5 minutes. Add snap peas, tomato, and chicken to pan; cook 3 minutes or until pasta is done.

Yield

Serves 4 (serving size: about 1 3/4 cups)

Calories 297
Fat 5.5g
Saturated Fat 1g
Monounsaturated Fat 3.1g
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.6g
Protein 24g
Carbohydrate 38g
Fiber 4g
Cholesterol 38mg
Iron 3mg
Sodium 610mg
Calcium 72mg
Sugars 8g Est. added sugars 1g