

How to Avoid Menopause Weight Gain

Menopause may also lead to a redistribution of a woman's body fat, with fat accumulating around her belly. Goodbye pear shape, hello apple. This added fat around the middle can be unhealthy. It increases your risk for diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and early death.

So, is there any way to stop menopause weight gain?

There are some things you can do to stop the pounds from creeping on and to keep yourself fit.

Put an emphasis on muscles

You lose muscle mass as you age as well as start to burn fewer calories. Include a good quantity of protein with every meal. Protein helps you maintain muscle mass. Incorporating weight training into your workouts – or adding more weight training days – can help build and maintain muscles as well. Don't rely on cardio exercise alone.

Cut some calories

Because women start to burn fewer calories (potentially a couple hundred daily), it's a good idea to scale back your intake of extra calories. Don't go wild. Just swapping an unhealthy snack for some low-calorie fruit or skipping a second glass of wine is good. Don't cut more than 500 calories a day. If you're eating out, order an appetizer as an entrée or set aside a portion of a large main course in a to-go container for a future meal.

Move more

Consider adding an extra day of working out into your exercise routine. The goal is to move more and burn a few more calories each week than you did before menopause. Do a mix of moderate and vigorous exercise that includes aerobic activities (swimming, walking, cycling) and resistance or strength training. Work all the major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, arms). You don't need to go to a gym; adding more activity in your day-to-day routine is fine.

Stand rather than sit

Whenever possible, stand rather than sit. You burn more calories when standing. Plus, standing can help keep fat away from your mid-section. Prolonged sitting is connected to higher levels of abdominal fat and fat around the liver and other organs. Invest in standing desk. Pace around while on the phone. Use a pedal exerciser while binge watching TV instead of lounging on the couch.

Get some sleep

High-quality sleep can help keep fat from accumulating around your belly. Poor sleep impacts our hunger hormones, making it hard for us to lose weight. Aim to make the kitchen and food off limits after 7 p.m. Brush your teeth so you're not tempted to eat. Eating late can interrupt with your sleep and cause you to gain weight. Ideally you should get 8 hours of sleep each night. A cool bedroom is best for sleep. It will also help offset hot flashes and night sweats.

Glowing screens can mess with your ability to fall asleep, so avoid them for at least an hour before bed.

Address your stress

Chronic stress can lead to increased levels of cortisol (the stress hormone), which makes it easier for fat to deposit around your belly. High cortisol levels can also result in insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. It's crucial that you manage your stress. Research shows being out in nature – or even looking at images of nature – can help reduce stress. Meditation apps are great tools for helping you quickly lower your heart rate and relax. While alcohol might seem like a good stress reliever, it shouldn't be a long-term coping method; the extra sugar in alcohol and mixers can result in you gaining more weight around your middle.

Talk to your doctor

Your doctor will partner with you to devise the best strategy for you to control your menopause symptoms and address weight gain. It's possible your weight gain could be related to a health condition other than menopause; your doctor will likely want to explore this option.