






## EXERCISE AROUND MENOPAUSE


Exercise around the menopause can be beneficial for relieving symptoms such as flushes, sleep, anxiety, low mood, bladder symptoms, as well as improve risk of long-term conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, dementia, and pelvic floor dysfunction (which can all be caused or worsened by menopause itself).


### What exercises should you be focusing on and why?


 **Resistance/ weight training** can help prevent osteoporosis and increase muscle mass. By building and strengthening the muscles and structures surrounding the bones means there is less physical force on bones, which can otherwise increase the risk of them breaking. Increasing muscle mass can also help with weight loss as muscle helps burn calories. Strength training can also help with metabolic health, in turn reducing the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

 **Yoga/ balance**- as oestrogen levels decline with menopause, this in turn causes muscle mass loss. This can impact ability to balance and increase risk of falling over and breaking bones. Balance exercises such as yoga and Pilates help reduce this risk. Additionally, the exercises often involve connecting the mind and body, which can help reduce stress levels and improve mental health.

 **Meditation and breathing exercises.** By slowing down thought processes and body movements, there is more control over the sympathetic nervous system. It is the sympathetic system which is responsible for production of the chemical adrenaline. Adrenaline is known as the 'fight or flight' chemical and evokes symptoms such as sweating, racing heart, anxiety, Meditation can calm these thus improving stress and mood, hot flushes, tingling, palpitations, and sleep, all of which can be worsened around the menopause.

 **Aerobic exercises** improve how efficiently the heart pumps blood around the body, as well as improving blood vessel and lung function. This in turn helps prevent heart disease and associated conditions such as diabetes. In addition, doing aerobic exercise can increase energy levels, boost mood, reduce hot flushes and improve sleep quality.

 **Brain stimulation**- we know that menopause and low oestrogen levels have been linked to worsening cognition and poor concentration. Keeping the brain stimulated through 'mental gymnastics' can improve these. Examples include word puzzles, mathematics problems as well as activities that require mental effort such as painting, drawing and other crafts. These activities are also known to help with mood and stress.

 **Pelvic floor exercises.** Lack of oestrogen leads to reduction in collagen and elasticity in the urogenital region. This in turn leads to conditions such as prolapse of pelvic organs and incontinence. Doing pelvic floors can help tighten the muscles and reduce laxity and pelvic floor issues.

