

WOMEN'S
HEALTH

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World Menopause Day: Your midlife reset

18
October
World
Menopause
Day

This year's World Menopause Day is all about lifestyle medicine — and for good reason. The choices we make every day — what we eat, how we move, how we rest — can profoundly shape our experience of menopause and beyond. Regular movement, nourishing food, good sleep, and stress management don't just ease symptoms like hot flushes, brain fog, and low mood; they also protect our heart, strengthen bones, support brain health, and boost chances of living well for longer. Think of it as investing in your

future self — small consistent changes can lead to big benefits.

Start with Your Plate

So, where to begin? Often, the simplest and most powerful place to start is with your nutrition. Food isn't just calories; it's fuel and nourishment for the whole body. A Mediterranean-style approach works brilliantly: colourful vegetables and fruits, wholegrains, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and oily fish. This combination supports bones, brain, and heart, while also helping to steady mood.

Our gut plays a big role too. Home

to trillions of microbes, it influences everything from hormone balance and weight to digestion, bloating, and even how calm or anxious we feel. As oestrogen dips, this balance can shift — leading to bloating, stubborn tummy fat, sluggish bowels, and low mood. To keep our gut happy, pack in a variety of fibre-rich plants, prebiotic vegetables like onions and broccoli, and fermented foods — such as kefir, live yoghurt, or sauerkraut — to help this ecosystem thrive. A healthier gut means better oestrogen recycling, which can ease symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats,

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and brain fog. And if you're on HRT, research shows it may help your gut stay closer to its pre-menopause balance.

Small tweaks to eating habits make a big difference as well: eat slowly, chew well, sip water throughout the day, avoid heavy meals late at night, and cut back on alcohol, fizzy drinks, and ultra-processed snacks. They can trigger bloating, slow digestion, and contribute to weight gain, low mood and sleep disruption.

Most nutrients come from a varied diet, but there are a few key exceptions. In the UK, vitamin D (around 1000 IU daily) is recommended through winter. And if you struggle with sleep or muscle tension, some supplements such as magnesium may be helpful.

Every little movement counts

Exercise isn't just about the scales — it's a cornerstone for our bones, muscles, heart, and even our gut. Regular movement can ease bloating, get sluggish bowels moving, and boost metabolism. Strength and weight training protect the skeleton and help preserve muscle mass, which naturally declines with age.

Balance and flexibility become increasingly important in midlife and beyond. Yoga, Pilates, or Tai Chi can improve posture, reduce the risk of falls, and even support digestion by keeping things moving internally.

Aim for a mix each week: some strength, some cardio, and a bit of balance work. Most importantly — make it enjoyable. Consistency with small, regular movement will always win over the occasional big effort.

Sleep is our superpower

Sleep is the time our body repairs and resets. Yet hot flushes, digestive discomfort, frequent bathroom trips, and a busy mind can all get in the way.

A simple routine can make a real difference: going to bed and waking at consistent times — even on weekends; keeping your bedroom cool, dark, and calm, and include a gentle wind-down stretch or breathing exercise. Cutting back on caffeine and alcohol, avoiding late meals, and stepping away from screens can also help your body switch off more easily. If your mind is racing, a relaxation app like CALM or Headspace can help you drift off.

If sleep problems persist, speak with your doctor. Around menopause, hormone changes and shifts in body



composition can contribute to issues like snoring, sleep apnoea, joint issues and restless leg syndrome, which may need further support.

Work on stress:

We often underestimate how much stress can magnify menopause symptoms. When we are tense, our body produces fewer digestive enzymes, making bloating and indigestion worse — and set off our nervous flight or fight system, increasing flushes and sweats. Mood swings, irritability, and anxiety are also direct effects of both stress and the hormonal shifts of this stage.

The good news? Small, daily resets really add up. Try journaling, a gentle walk, a relaxing bath, mindfulness, or simple breathing exercises. You may also find guided meditation, breathwork, or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) helpful. Apps like Breathwrk can guide you through quick, calming techniques.

Stay Connected

Don't underestimate the power of connection. Menopause can feel isolating — especially if symptoms leave you tired or low. Sharing time with others — whether it's a walk with a friend, a hobby group, or even a quick coffee catch-up — can lift your mood, ease stress, and remind you that you're not going through this alone. Many GPs now recommend social prescribing — joining local activities, walking groups,

or community classes — not just for company, but because meaningful connection is proven to support both mental and physical health.

Consider HRT

HRT remains the most effective option for menopause symptoms and long-term health benefits such as bone and heart health. But it's not the whole story, and it isn't for everyone. Some women prefer to manage their symptoms without it, while for others it may not be recommended. It doesn't have to be an either/or decision. HRT often works best when combined with a supportive lifestyle — what you eat, how you move, how you sleep, and how you manage stress all play a big role. And if you do choose HRT, doses, types, and timings can be tailored to you.

My take home message

With a balanced lifestyle — nourishing your gut, keeping active, getting restorative sleep, calming your nervous system, and staying connected — you can navigate menopause not just coping, but truly thriving.

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