



Why Am I So Puffy?

A Cliff Notes Guide to the Bloat, the Belly, and What You Can Do About It

Created By Virginia Crowe

Certified Menopause Coaching Specialist

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A Menopausal Survival Series
by Virginia Crowe
Thrive by Design

About Thrive by Design with Virginia Crowe

Thrive by Design was born out of my own personal journey through menopause and a deep desire to change the experience for other women. After facing a terrifying panic attack on a hike—one that resulted in me being airlifted off a mountain—I realized how little support and information was available for women going through such a major transition.

My doctor brushed it off as “just perimenopause,” offering no guidance or solutions. That moment changed everything for me.

With years of experience as a personal trainer, wellness coach, art for healing facilitator, and nutrition coach, I had many of the tools—but I knew I needed to understand menopause on a deeper level. That’s why I became a Certified Menopause Coaching Specialist. Thrive by Design is the program I wish I had: a fully customizable blend of fitness, nutrition, mindset, and creative healing, tailored to support the unique and complex needs of women in midlife. Whether online or in person, this program is designed to help you feel informed, empowered, and truly supported.

If you’ve ever felt confused, dismissed, or alone during this transition—you’re not. I’m here, and so is Thrive by Design. Reach out if you have questions. Let’s change the narrative together.

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Introduction: When Your Body Feels Inflated Overnight

If you've ever gone to bed feeling fine and woken up wondering why your pants no longer zip, this guide is for you. Bloating and water retention during menopause are incredibly common—but that doesn't make them any less frustrating.

This Cliff Notes guide will walk you through the *real reasons* behind the puffiness, the science that explains why it's not all in your head, and small, sustainable strategies to start feeling better now.

This is just a **quick-start version** of the full answers, tools, and protocols included in my Thrive by Design program. If you're ready to go deeper and get real support for your midlife body, I'd love to guide you there. -Virginia



Section 1: What's Causing the Bloat?

Menopause brings major shifts in hormone levels—especially estrogen and progesterone. These fluctuations can:

- Slow digestion (causing gas and bloating)
- Affect kidney function and fluid balance (causing puffiness)
- Increase inflammation and stress hormones (hello, cortisol)
- Change gut bacteria (leading to more bloating and food sensitivity)

Even if you haven't changed your eating habits, your body *is* changing how it processes food, stores fluid, and reacts to stress.

This isn't "weight gain" in the traditional sense—it's often a mix of water retention, digestive sluggishness, and hormonal changes.





swollen legs, ankles

Water Retention

- Puffiness in hands, face, ankles
- Feels squishy or swollen
- Triggered by high sodium, stress, dehydration



Digestive Bloating

- Gassy, tight belly
- Triggered by food sensitivities or slow digestion
- Worse after meals

Midlife Fat Gain

- Gradual, more permanent
- Tied to hormone-driven fat redistribution (especially belly)

Understanding what you're dealing with is the first step toward relief.



Section 3: What Actually Helps (and What Doesn't)

Here's what can make a measurable difference—without extreme diets or expensive supplements:

Eat to Support Digestion and Hormone Balance

- Focus on cooked veggies, fiber, and healthy fats
- Add ginger, peppermint, and fennel to meals
- Avoid processed foods and artificial sweeteners



Hydration Is Key

- Dehydration actually *increases* water retention
- Aim for half your body weight in ounces per day
- Add electrolytes if you sweat often





Move Gently, But Often

- Walking, light yoga, and rebounding can stimulate digestion and circulation
- Movement helps reduce cortisol and lymphatic stagnation

Get Sleep and Manage Stress

- Poor sleep and high cortisol are major bloat triggers
- Breathing practices, time outdoors, art therapy, and laughter help regulate nervous system stress





Supplements to Consider (check with your health provider)

- Magnesium Malate, or Glycinate
- Perfect Amino
- Probiotics
- Digestive enzymes
- Dandelion tea or milk thistle for gentle detox support

Section 4: What to Avoid

These common habits can make bloating worse:

- Overeating raw cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, kale)
- Skipping meals, then eating large portions
- Drinking carbonated beverages
- Excess caffeine, especially on an empty stomach
- Ignoring your stress levels





Section 5: This eBook Is Just the Beginning

This guide is a **Cliff Notes version** of what's available inside my full **Thrive by Design** program.

In Thrive by Design, you'll find:

- Detailed nutrition and meal planning support
- A 12-week lifestyle and movement plan for midlife and menopause
- On-demand workouts and core-specific training
- Gut health protocols and anti-bloat meal guides
- Stress management and sleep optimization tools
- Optional concierge-level 1:1 coaching online or in-person at my Laguna Hills, CA studio

Whether you're looking for an affordable self-guided plan or personalized support, there's a place for you inside Thrive by Design.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

You don't have to figure it out alone. If you're tired of feeling inflamed, swollen, or like your body is working against you, it's time for a reset that's designed *for* you—not against you.

Visit: www.thrivewithvirginia.com **Email:** thrivewithvirginia@gmail.com **Instagram:**

Let's help you feel strong, clear, and confident again—inside and out.



Created by Virginia Crowe

Virginia Crowe is a certified menopause coaching specialist, wellness educator, certified fitness trainer, artist, and midlife empowerment coach dedicated to

helping women thrive through menopause with strength, humor, and confidence. Drawing from her own experience and years of coaching women in midlife, Virginia blends science-backed wellness, mindset support, and creativity to guide women in this powerful season of life.

She offers a range of online programs under the name **Thrive by Design with Virginia Crowe**, from **self-guided memberships** to **concierge 1:1 coaching**, both online and in person at her studio in Laguna Hills, California.

In addition to her wellness programs, Virginia teaches **mindful art classes** to reduce stress and anxiety and is the author of *Unlocking the Soul*, a guide to using creative practices for emotional well-being and healing. Her offerings include on-demand art classes, paint parties, and wellness-focused coaching that meets women wherever they are in their journey.

To learn more or connect directly, visit:

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