



Menopause Belly: WTF and Other Frequently Asked Questions

A Lighthearted, Science-Backed Guide to Midlife Weight Gain and How to Beat the Belly Bulge

Certified Menopause Coaching Specialist

A Menopausal Survival Series

by Virginia Crowe

Thrive by Design



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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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INTRO: The Button on My Jeans Is Hanging on for Dear Life

You didn't change your diet. You didn't stop exercising. And yet... suddenly your waistband feels like it's punishing you, and your belly has developed its own zip code.

Welcome to one of the most confusing (and frustrating) parts of midlife: the **menopause belly**.

The good news? You're not alone, it's not your fault, and you're not doomed to live in leggings forever. This guide combines humor with science-backed





Chapter 1: Where Did This Belly Come From?!

The Concern: "I swear I didn't eat more—why am I gaining weight in my stomach?"

The Science: Hormonal shifts during perimenopause and menopause—especially **declining estrogen**—change how and where your body stores fat. Here's what's happening:

- **Lower estrogen = more visceral fat** (fat stored deep in the belly)
- **Insulin sensitivity declines**, so your body stores more fat, even from the same meals
- **Cortisol (the stress hormone)** may rise, and chronic stress signals your body to hold on to belly fat
- **Muscle mass decreases**, slowing your metabolism (less muscle = fewer calories burned at rest)

Chapter 2: Why This Matters Beyond Aesthetics

Visceral belly fat isn't just frustrating—it can increase the risk of:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Insulin resistance
- Inflammation

This isn't about fitting into your jeans. It's about **feeling strong, energized, and healthy** in the second half of life.



Chapter 3: Real Solutions for the Menopause Belly (No Starvation Required)





1. Ditch Diet Culture, Embrace Blood Sugar Balance

Instead of cutting calories to extremes (which slows metabolism more), focus on:

- **Protein with every meal** (20–30g per serving)
- **Fiber-rich veggies** (broccoli, leafy greens, cauliflower)
- **Healthy fats** (avocado, olive oil, nuts)
- **Complex carbs** (quinoa, sweet potatoes, berries)

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 **Why it works:** Balancing your blood sugar reduces insulin spikes, cravings, and fat storage.

2. Build Muscle, Boost Metabolism

Strength training is the secret weapon for belly fat loss in midlife. Why? Because **muscle burns more calories than fat**, even at rest.

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Studies show that women who strength train 2–3x/week reduce visceral fat and improve insulin sensitivity.

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Start with bodyweight, resistance bands, or dumbbells—and progressively increase.





3. Reduce Stress (Yes, It's That Important)

Cortisol loves to send fat to your midsection. Managing stress is not just for your mental health—it's for your *waistline*.

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Try:

- Walking in nature
- Deep breathing
- Art or journaling
- Saying “no” more often
- Meditation apps like Calm or Insight Timer

4. Sleep More to Weigh Less

Lack of sleep increases ghrelin (hunger hormone) and decreases leptin (satiety hormone). Plus, you're more likely to snack when tired.

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Aim for 7–9 hours of good-quality sleep. Prioritize it like it's your job.





5. Say Goodbye to These Belly Bloat Triggers

Alcohol (especially wine and cocktails)

Processed carbs and sugar

Artificial sweeteners

Carbonated drinks

Excess caffeine

Emotional eating without awareness

Not saying *never*—just become a detective about how your body responds.



Chapter 4: Gentle Habits That Actually Help

- **Hydrate early and often** (aim for half your body weight in ounces daily)
- **Walk after meals** (lowers blood sugar and supports digestion)
- **Start your day with protein**, not sugar (skip the muffin, try eggs or protein smoothies)
- **Track your symptoms**, not your weight (journal energy, bloating, mood, and cravings)

Chapter 5: Belly Fat Humor —Because Laughter Shrinks Cortisol

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“My belly now has its own gravitational pull.” “I bought shapewear for a Zoom call. That’s where we are.” “It’s not a food baby—it’s a hormonal hostage.”

Laughing is one of the best things you can do for your belly and your brain. Keep doing it.





Chapter 6: What *Doesn't* Work (and Might Make It Worse)

- Extreme calorie restriction
- Fasting for 20+ hours/day
- Two-a-day cardio workouts
- Juice cleanses
- Thinking it's all about willpower

Your body isn't broken—it's *adapting*. And it needs **support**, not punishment.

Conclusion: You're Not Failing—Your Body Is Shifting

That stubborn belly is not a sign that you're lazy or out of control—it's a signal that your body is **changing** and needs new strategies.

Midlife weight gain is common, but it's not inevitable or untouchable. With strength, nourishment, stress support, and self-compassion, you can **reshape more than your body—you can reshape how you feel.**

This isn't about getting your 30-year-old body back. It's about becoming your **strongest, smartest, most confident self now.**





BONUS: 7-Day Belly Reset Checklist

Day 1: Eat 30g of protein at breakfast**Day 2:** Walk 10 minutes after dinner**Day 3:** Do a 20-minute strength workout**Day 4:** Try a guided meditation**Day 5:** Hydrate—track your water**Day 6:** Swap sugar snacks for protein/fiber**Day 7:** Reflect on how your body feels—not just how it looks

When to See a Doctor

Check in with a provider if:

- You're gaining weight rapidly without explanation
- You have intense bloating or abdominal pain
- You suspect insulin resistance, thyroid issues, or PCOS
- You feel stuck no matter what you try



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 journey and professional expertise, Virginia combines science-backed wellness, mindset support, and creativity to guide women in this transformative phase.

She offers a range of **online programs for women in menopause** under the brand **Thrive by Design with Virginia Crowe**—from **self-guided membership programs** that are extremely cost-affordable, to **full concierge 1:1 coaching**, available both online and in person at her studio in Laguna Hills, California.

In addition to menopause coaching, Virginia teaches **mindful art classes** designed to reduce stress and anxiety, promote healing, and unlock creative expression. She is also the author of *Unlocking the Soul*, a book exploring mindful art practices for personal growth and emotional well-being.

Virginia's offerings include:

- 🎨 On-demand online art classes
- 🎉 Paint party workshops (virtual and in-person)
- 💪 Movement, nutrition, and mindset programs tailored for menopausal wellness

Her mission is to empower women to not just survive menopause, but to **Thrive by Design**—embracing this new season of life with joy, resilience, and creativity.

To learn more about Virginia's coaching, classes, and programs, visit:

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