



ABDOMINAL FAT DURING MENOPAUSE

Around age 45 or so, many women start to notice that menopause belly, muffin top or “menopot”. Abdominal fat, especially visceral fat, is biochemically different and more metabolically active than fat stored in other areas of the body. Visceral fat even secretes more inflammatory chemicals and hormones than other types of fat. So, preventing or reversing abdominal fat is not just about vanity, it’s about our overall health, because abdominal fat is consistently linked with insulin resistance, impaired glucose control and a higher risk for CVD and breast cancer. So, how can we get rid of menopausal belly fat? Understanding hormonal changes associated with perimenopause and menopause can be helpful in knowing when and how to effectively intervene.

The top five hormonal changes associated with these life stages are: estrogen/estrogen dominance, cortisol, insulin, leptin and thyroid. Let’s touch on each of these briefly...

Loss of **Estrogen** and/or estrogen dominance are both linked to expanding abdominal fat mass. Here we might look to addressing aromatase enzymes which are more active in visceral adipose tissue. Increased **Cortisol** production menopause can lead to insulin resistance and metabolic dysfunction. **Insulin** resistance occurs because of the inflammatory chemicals produced in abdominal fat. Basically, insulin resistance is where the cells lose their response to insulin. So, more insulin is required to manage glucose. Since insulin is a gatekeeper of metabolism, higher insulin levels can lead to a cycle of weight gain, abdominal fat gain and leptin

resistance. **Leptin** is the hormone that tells us to stop eating when we are full. Cells become leptin resistant when insulin levels are consistently elevated or when we eat too many refined carbohydrates. **Thyroid** hormones regulate how quickly we burn calories, so approaching menopause can result in “thyropause” or an underactivity of the thyroid gland.

What can we do?

1. Evaluate your diet for things like high intake of refined carbohydrates. Remove inflammatory or trigger foods. Eliminate alcohol, which can lower metabolism by at least 70% for more than 24 hours. Explore Intermittent Fasting as a way to lower body weight and abdominal fat and improve insulin sensitivity.
2. Move! Did you know that there are approximately 35 chronic diseases that are associated with sedentary behavior? HIIT training and yoga are two types of exercise perfect for menopausal women.
3. Sleep! Studies show that people sleeping 7-8 hours per night tend to accumulate less visceral fat. Sleep quality is just as important as sleep quantity. Menopausal women who suffer from poor sleep quality usually have an altered cortisol response and are insulin resistant.

So, that’s the story on abdominal fat. Don’t try to change everything at once, just pick a few things to work on and most importantly, be consistent!

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