



Understanding and managing long-term health effects of menopause

Menopause marks a significant milestone in women's lives, bringing changes that extend beyond hot flashes and mood swings. As estrogen levels decrease, your body faces new changes and potential challenges. But here's the key: knowledge and action can make all the difference. This article will equip you with practical strategies to maintain your health and vitality during menopause and beyond. Let's dive into the facts and explore how you can take control of your well-being.

Building stronger bones: Your guide to preventing osteoporosis

Bone health matters, especially for women. With one in three Canadian women experiencing osteoporosis-related fractures and 80% of those affected being women, taking care of our bones is essential. The process of bone loss typically begins before menopause, with women losing about 2% of bone density annually in the years surrounding this transition. This natural change doesn't have to limit your lifestyle – simple, practical steps can make a significant difference.

What can you do?

- Improve nutrition for bone health
- Take supplements
- Engage in strength-training exercises
- Practice exercises that improve balance to prevent falls
- Learn how to safely perform everyday activities

Nurturing your heart: Simple steps to reduce cardiovascular risks

Heart disease and stroke are the leading cause of premature death in Canadian women. Women often experience different symptoms than men, complicating early detection. The menopausal transition is crucial, as declining estrogen can increase arterial cholesterol buildup, raising heart disease and stroke risks. Early menopause or ovary removal further elevates these risks. By taking proactive steps, women can significantly reduce their risk and maintain cardiovascular wellness throughout their lives.

What can you do?

- Improve nutrition for heart health
- Exercise regularly – aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week and include strength training at least twice a week
- If possible, get regular screenings for cholesterol, blood pressure, blood glucose, BMI and waist circumference
- Manage stress and anxiety through relaxation techniques or mindfulness practices

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Diabetes decoded: Navigating risks during menopause

Diabetes risk in women can increase during menopause due to hormonal changes. These shifts can lead to increased belly fat and higher blood pressure, both significant risk factors for type 2 diabetes. Taking proactive steps can make a substantial difference in managing diabetes risk.

What can you do?

- Improve nutrition for blood sugar management
- Exercise regularly – again, aim for at least 150 minutes a week and incorporate strength training at least twice a week
- If possible, try and have regular screenings for blood glucose, BMI and waist circumference



Oral health and menopause: Keeping your smile bright and healthy

Menopause can significantly impact oral health, often in ways that aren't immediately obvious. The decrease in estrogen levels that affects bone density throughout the body also extends to the jaw, potentially leading to bone loss in this area. This can result in tooth loss and increase the risk of periodontal disease. Additionally, menopause often causes a reduction in saliva production, which can contribute to an increased risk of cavities. Simple yet effective oral care habits can help women to protect their dental health during and after menopause.

What can you do?

- Brush twice a day and floss daily
- Schedule regular dental cleanings and check-ups
- Drink enough water and chew sugarless gum to increase saliva production
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months
- Use soft bristled brush heads



Comfort in change: Understanding and managing genitourinary health

Genitourinary syndrome of menopause (GSM) is a postmenopausal condition causing genital, sexual and urinary symptoms due to estrogen deficiency that affects up to 80% of post-menopausal women, impacting their reproductive and urinary systems. The reduced estrogen levels can lead to various symptoms, including vaginal dryness, itchiness, burning, reduced sexual desire, urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections. These changes can cause physical discomfort, emotional distress and significantly impact daily life and sexual relationships. Additionally, pelvic organ prolapse may occur due to weakened pelvic floor muscles, causing discomfort and affecting confidence.

What can you do?

- Try vaginal moisturizers for everyday relief and lubricants for sex
- Speak to your partner about your symptoms
- Strengthen your pelvic floor by doing exercises like Kegels
- Ask your doctor about treatment options

Menopause is a natural transition that brings significant changes to a woman's body, affecting various aspects of health from bone density to heart function, metabolic processes and genitourinary wellness. While these changes can seem daunting, they don't have to define your quality of life. By staying informed, proactive and engaged with your healthcare providers, you can effectively manage and even mitigate many of the long-term health effects associated with menopause. Your journey through menopause is unique, and you have the power to shape it positively.



Clinically reviewed by Hannah McWilliams (MBACP) on February 5, 2025

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