Healthy Weight at Menopause
CONTENTS

WEIGHT GAIN AT MENOPAUSE 2
BODY MASS INDEX 2
MONTHLY WEIGHT LOSS PROGRESS CHART 3
WHAT SHOULD WE EAT? 3
  – How to limit sugar consumption 3
  – Low calorie meal plan 4
DAILY MEAL PLAN 4
EXAMPLE SERVING SIZES 5
OMEGA-3 FATS 6
  – How much do we need? 6
  – Sources of Omega-3 fats 6
CALCIUM, VITAMIN D AND OSTEOPOROSIS 7
  – How much calcium and vitamin D do we need? 7
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY 9
SHOPPING GUIDE 10
**Weight gain at menopause**

During menopause your body will go through hormonal changes which make you more likely to gain weight. Typically this will occur around your abdomen rather than your hips and thighs. Hormonal changes alone don’t necessarily trigger menopausal weight gain. This is usually related to ageing, lifestyle and genetic factors.

Muscle mass tends to reduce with age, while fat increases. Loss of muscle mass decreases the rate at which your body uses calories, which can make it more challenging to maintain a healthy weight. If you continue to eat as you always have and don’t increase your physical activity, you are more likely to gain weight.

Menopausal weight gain can have serious implications for your health. Excess weight increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and various types of cancer, including colorectal and breast cancer.

**Body Mass Index**

Body Mass Index is calculated as follows:

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kilograms)}}{\text{Height (metres)}^2} \\
\text{eg. 70kg ÷ (1.7m x 1.7m) = 24.2 BMI}
\]

Ideal or desirable weight for people between ages of:

- 18-65 years is in the BMI range of 20-25
- Over 65 years is in the BMI range of 22-27

Weigh yourself once a week, preferably in the morning without shoes and with minimal clothing.

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**Monthly weight loss progress chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st month</th>
<th>2nd month</th>
<th>3rd month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End of week 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of week 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of week 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of week 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight loss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What should we eat?**

Current dietary guidelines for weight management promote plant-based and low-fat foods, combined with regular exercise.

Healthy eating means reducing your intake of fat, sugar and alcohol and increasing your intake of high fibre foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes, wholegrain bread and cereals. Limit consumption of high fat meat and include more fish and skinless chicken (the Cancer Council suggests around 100g per day).

**How to limit sugar consumption**

- Limit refined sugars, which include white, brown, raw sugar, honey, glucose and syrups.
- Limit food and drinks that are high in sugar such as cakes, sweets, desserts, soft drinks and juice.
- Where possible select a sugar free alternative.
- Reduce the amount of sugar you add to foods and drinks.
Low calorie meal plan

There is a low calorie meal plan in this booklet for you to follow. You should aim to stick to the plan for at least three months to make a difference in your weight. This is a 1200 calorie or 5000 kilojoule meal plan.

If your Bone Mineral Density (BMD) is low, you should consider increasing your dairy serve by one and removing one fat serve from the meal plan. If the recommended 1000-1300 mg of calcium per day is not achieved through your diet, it is suggested that you take a calcium supplement.

While you are following this meal plan you must increase your exercise level from what you are currently doing. Recommended exercise to lose weight is 35-60 minutes of aerobic exercise seven days a week e.g. brisk walking, jogging, cycling or swimming.

Daily meal plan

Breakfast

• 2 serves carbohydrates
• 1 serve fat
• 1 serve dairy
• 1 serve fruit
• 1 serve vegetables (optional)

Afternoon tea

• 1 serve fruit
• 1 serve dairy

Dinner

• 2 serves protein
• 1 serve carbohydrate
• 2 – 4 serves vegetables
• 1 serve fat
• 1 serve dairy
• 1 serve fruit

Lunch

• 1 serve protein
• 2 serves carbohydrates
• 1 serve fat
• 2 – 4 serves vegetables
• 1 serve fruit

Examples of serving sizes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CARBOHYDRATES</th>
<th>FRUITS</th>
<th>DAIRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 slice multigrain/sour dough/raisin bread</td>
<td>1 small apple/pear orange/nectarine</td>
<td>½ cup Hi Lo/low fat/soy milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3 cup porridge/ All Bran/Guardian</td>
<td>½ small mango/grape fruit/½ medium banana</td>
<td>½ small tub or 100g diet or low fat natural yoghurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Weet Bix/Vita Brits</td>
<td>1 cup rockmelon/watermelon/berries</td>
<td>100 ml light flavoured milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup cooked rice/pasta/noodles</td>
<td>½ cup fruit salad/unsweetened fruit</td>
<td>¾ cup skim milk tone/light start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup lentils/baked beans/chickpeas</td>
<td>1 slice avocado/pineapple</td>
<td>20g or 1 thin slice low fat hard cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Vita Wheat/ 2 Ryvita crackers</td>
<td>½ cup grapes/fruit juice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup cooked sweet potato/com/potato mash</td>
<td>2 mandarins or kiwi fruits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small potato</td>
<td>1 glass vegetable juice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROTEIN</th>
<th>FAT</th>
<th>VEGETABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50g cooked lean beef/pork lamb/skinless chicken</td>
<td>1 teaspoon margarine/butter/peanut butter</td>
<td>75g or ½ cup cooked vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 king prawns</td>
<td>2 teaspoons light margarine</td>
<td>1 cup salad vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-100g fresh or canned fish in brine (no oil)</td>
<td>2 teaspoons mayonnaise/salad dressing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ cup low fat cottage or ricotta cheese</td>
<td>2 teaspoons light sour cream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 medium sized egg</td>
<td>1 teaspoon olive or canola oil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120g tofu</td>
<td>2 teaspoons nuts of any type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lentils, beans, cheese and nuts are excellent sources of proteins for vegetarians

* Serving sizes above do not always match with Australian Guidelines to Healthy Eating due to the calorie restriction.
Omega-3 fats (the good fats!)

According to the Heart Foundation Australia, Omega-3 fats found in fish and certain plant-based products have been found to be beneficial for:

- reducing the risk of heart conditions
- improving arthritis.

They are also being investigated in relation to lowering cancer risks and improving memory.

How much do we need?

Women need 500 mg of Omega-3 fats per day.

Sources of Omega-3 fatty acids

**Fish sources:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rich (&gt;1000mg/100g fish)</th>
<th>Medium (300-1000mg/100g fish)</th>
<th>Low (&lt;300mg/100g fish)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canned Sardines</td>
<td>Red Gurnard</td>
<td>Bream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Salmon</td>
<td>Australian Salmon</td>
<td>Flathead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoked Salmon</td>
<td>Mullet</td>
<td>Flounder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Mackeral</td>
<td>Pilchard</td>
<td>Groper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Salmon</td>
<td>Blue Mussel</td>
<td>Shark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh or canned Tuna</td>
<td>Calamari</td>
<td>Sand whiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrow Squid</td>
<td>Snapper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Rock Oysters</td>
<td>Trevally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Herring</td>
<td>Rainbow Trout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemfish</td>
<td>Crab, Scallops, Abalone, Prawns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ocean Perch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Plant sources of Omega-3 fats:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Nuts</th>
<th>Seeds</th>
<th>Beans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dark green leafy vegetables</td>
<td>Walnuts, pecans</td>
<td>Linseeds</td>
<td>Soybeans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calcium, vitamin D and osteoporosis

Calcium is important for building strong bones and helping to protect us from developing osteoporosis. Later in life, when the body loses calcium, there is an increased need for calcium, especially for women around menopause.

Getting enough vitamin D is important too – it helps the body absorb calcium from the diet.

How much calcium and vitamin D do we need?

**Calcium**

After menopause women need at least three serves of calcium rich foods each day (1000 to 1300 mg daily from high calcium foods).

If you find it difficult to get enough calcium from food, ask your doctor or dietitian about taking a calcium supplement.

If you can’t tolerate dairy products or don’t enjoy them, there are some calcium-enriched products available such as orange juice, cereals and soy milk. However calcium added to soy drinks may not be as well absorbed as from dairy foods, so you may need larger servings.

People need different amounts of calcium at different ages – the food table on the next page shows you how to get the calcium you need.

**Tip:** You can add a calcium ‘boost’ to soups, smoothies, curries and sauces by adding skim milk powder.
Good sources of calcium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods</th>
<th>Serve size in grams</th>
<th>Calcium in mg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tahini</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soy beans (boiled)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custard</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almonds</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice cream</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tofu (calcium set)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmon tinned</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardines canned</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheddar cheese reduced fat</td>
<td>40g (2 slices)</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parmesan cheese</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haloumi cheese</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feta cheese</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoghurt (flavoured)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoghurt (plain)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk reduced fat</td>
<td>250 ml</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk regular</td>
<td>250 ml</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk skim</td>
<td>250 ml</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk calcium fortified</td>
<td>250 ml</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps the absorption of calcium from the gut. We need at least 600-800 IU (international units) of vitamin D daily.

Low vitamin D levels are mainly seen in women who do not get enough sun exposure. To prevent low vitamin D levels you need sun exposure to bare skin and, if necessary, to take a vitamin D supplement. The table on the next page gives an estimate of how long you need to expose your skin to sun per day to make enough vitamin D. Your age and skin colour determines the amount of sun exposure you need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vitamin D</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Spring/Autumn</th>
<th>Winter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair Skin</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark Skin or Elderly</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area exposed</td>
<td>Face, arms and hands</td>
<td>Face, arms and hands</td>
<td>Face, arms and hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to stay out of the sun between 10am and 2pm in the summer and wear a 30+ SPF sunscreen lotion.

There are small quantities of vitamin D in a few foods, such as fatty fish (salmon, herring and mackerel). It can also be found in liver, eggs and fortified foods such as margarine. There are very small amounts in some low-fat milks.

Physical Activity

It is thought that being overweight and associated inactivity are risk factors for heart diseases and cancers. Being active is a key element for weight control. Regular moderate exercise is more beneficial than the occasional burst of intense exercise.

Walking is one of the best, safest, cheapest and easiest activities.

Walking groups

Walking groups bring people together socially, improve health and create an environment in which exercise is more easily sustained.

To find out about walking groups close to you, visit the website below and click on your area on the map provided.


You can also visit your local library or community centre for more information on activities in your area.
Shopping guide

To help you with the overwhelming task of choosing healthy foods when you shop we have put together this shopping guide. This includes registered companies ® and choices within the food groups.

Choices listed for cereals, breads, biscuits, noodles, rice, legumes, fruits and dairy are all low GI (glycemic index). The glycemic index is a way of ranking foods that contain carbohydrates according to the effect they have on blood sugar levels. Always remember to choose low fat and low sugar food sources. Foods which are low fat, low sugar and high fibre are the best choices for maintaining a healthy weight at menopause.

The lower the GI of the food the smaller the rise in the blood sugar levels. On food labels look for the following:

• Fats – under 10g per 100g
• Sugars – under 10g per 100g
• Dietary fibre over 5g per 100g

### CEREALS

- Uncle Tobys®
- Health Wise
- Vita Wheats
- Traditional oats
- Sustain
- Sanitarium®
- Low fat muesli
- Weet Bix
- Light n’ Tasty
- Up & Go liquid breakfast
- Kelloggs®
  - All Bran
  - Sustain
  - Guardian
  - Just Right
- Weight watchers®
  - Fruit & Fibre
  - Tropicana
- Lowan®
  - Natural oat bran
  - Natural muesli (fruit and nut)

### BREADS

- Noble Rise®
- Sour dough
- Whole grain
- Soy linseed
- Helgas®
  - Golden sour dough
  - Soy linseed
  - Fruit and grain
  - Toasted soy and sesame
- Burgen®
  - Fruit and muesli
  - Soy linseed
  - Oat bran and honey loaf
- Tip top®
  - Raisin toast
  - Multigrain
  - Wholemeal

### MILK

- Fresh milk less than 2% fat
- Soylife or Sanitarium®
  - Low or no fat soy milk
- Pura®
  - Tone fat free
  - Light Start
- Devondale®
  - Skim milk
  - Smart plus
- Dairy Farmers/ Woolworths/ Homebrand®
  - Low fat and fat free
  - Evaporated milks - choose skim varieties

### BISCUITS

#### SWEET

- Arnotts®
  - Snack Right
  - Full o’ Fruit
  - Fruit Pillow
- Weight watchers®
  - Raspberry tartlets
- Freedom Foods®
  - Fruit cookies 97% fat free

#### SAVOURY

- Arnotts®
  - Vita Wheats original
  - Vita Wheats cracked pepper
- Paradise®
  - Wholemeal cracker 97% fat free
- Kavli®
  - Wholemeal fat free
  - Crisp bread
- Westons®
  - Ryvita crackers
- Premium Brand®
  - All fat free varieties

### PASTA, NOODLES, RICE

- Pasta
  - Wholemeal
  - White
  - Spinach
- Continental®
  - Pasta and sauce with Heart Foundation tick/ approved

### RICE

- Basmati
- Doongara
- Long grain (white or brown)

### NOODLES

- Buckwheat
- Pearl barley
- Mung bean
- Semolina
- Fresh rice noodles
- Hokkien noodles
- Two minute noodles (limit seasoning)
- Fantastic®
  - Noodle in a cup
  - Vegetable curry
- Maggi®
  - Chicken and beef
YOGHURT
Danone, Bulla, Ski, Yoplait, Nestlé®
99% fat free/diet
Soylife®
99% fat free products
Fruche®
Light 99% fat free

CHEESE
Hard cheese < 15% fat
Kraft, Bega, Devondale,
Dairy Farmers, Weight
Watchers®
Soft cheeses < 10% fat
Bulla, Dairy Farmers,
Weight Watchers, King
Island®

LEGUMES
Red kidney beans
Baked beans
Lentils
Three bean mix
Chickpeas
Old el Paso®
Refried beans (fat free)
Mexie beans (fat free)
Thick n’ Chunky salsa
(fat free)
Tofu
Tempeh

VEGETABLES
Vegetables can be raw,
cooked, canned or frozen.
Vegetables with
significant amount
of carbohydrates include
yam, sweet potato, potato,
parsnip, cassava and corn.
All other vegetables are
good and they are low in
carbohydrates eg: broccoli,
cabbage, cauliflower and
spinach.
Vegetables are a good
source of vitamins and
minerals

FRUITS
All fresh fruits
Tinned fruits in natural
juice
Goulburn Valley®
Ardmona®
SPC®
Weight Watchers®
Dried fruits in small
amounts

SALAD DRESSING
Choose 99% fat free
varieties

SAUCES
Choose < 3% fat (3
g/100g)
eg. soy sauce, chili sauce,
teriyaki sauce, curry paste
and mustard

CONDIMENTS
Choose low salt varieties
and use in small amounts.
Avoid cream sauces
and choose salt reduced
varieties. Aim for
< 450 mg/100g sodium.

ICE CREAM AND
CONFECTIONERY
Choose products
< 3% fat (light).
These are occasional extra
foods and not a suitable
source for dairy-based
calcium.

MEAT AND
POULTRY
Choose lean varieties and
cook with minimal olive oil
or canola oil.

EGGS
Limit to 6 per week.

FISH
Aim for 3 serves per week.
Canned fish-choose with
spring water or olive oil.

DRINKS
Sports drinks, e.g.
Gatorade, Powerade for
vigorous exercise only.
Low kilojoule (calorie)
drinks are OK in small
amounts.
Drinks with caffeine
and sugar are not good
choices e.g. Red bull,
Lift Plus.

Unsweetened fruit juice
(in small amounts)
½ cup = 1 medium fruit

For further support and guidance please ring
for an appointment with a dietitian
Nutrition and Dietetics Department
King Edward Memorial Hospital
374 Bagot Road, Subiaco WA 6008
Telephone: (08) 9340 2795
Website: www.wnhs.health.wa.gov.au (under N in the A-Z Services)

For more information about menopause services at KEMH
please call the Menopause Clinic

Menopause Clinic
King Edward Memorial Hospital
374 Bagot Road, Subiaco WA 6008
Telephone: (08) 9340 1355
Website: www.wnhs.health.wa.gov.au (under M in the A-Z Services)