

Top Lifestyle Tips for Hormonal Health



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General

Stay hydrated: Fresh water, herbal teas: minimise/cut out caffeine & alcohol (common triggers for worsening symptoms). Check out joinclubsoda.com for support and inspiration on mindful drinking.

If relevant, **seek support to stop smoking** (common trigger for hot flushes and worsens bone & heart health).

Layer light clothing (and bedlinen). Wear natural, breathable fibres when possible.

Fill a small spray bottle with water and use this to spritz yourself if you feel overheated.

If you suffer with hot flushes, **use a fan**; small portable ones are available to take out and about.

Consider keeping a journal/using an app (e.g. Balance) to see if you can identify any symptom triggers.

Nutrition

Centre your diet around plant-based whole-foods:

women who follow a plant-based diet have a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Recent evidence suggests that they may also suffer fewer premenstrual and menopausal symptoms; leafy greens and dark-coloured berries are particularly beneficial.

Include a serving (or two) of beans/lentils/hummus

in your daily diet – a fantastic source of fibre, protein and micronutrients. If you do not already regularly consume these and/or suffer with bloating, build up intake slowly and consider short-term digestive enzymes (e.g. BeanAssist); see also Dr Megan Rossi's excellent book: *Eat Yourself Healthy* (focuses on improving gut health).

Think “right carbs, good fats” not “low-carb, high fat” or “no fat”: complex carbohydrates (e.g. root vegetables, beans, oats, wholegrains) and plant-based fats (e.g. nuts, seeds, avocado, good quality olive oil) are essential for good hormonal health.

Consider switching cow's milk for fortified soya/oat/hemp milk (more heart-healthy).

Include minimally processed soya foods in your diet: e.g. edamame beans, tofu, tempeh, miso – helpful for menopausal symptoms, heart and breast health.

Flavour your food with a multitude of *herbs & spices* (rich in polyphenols – plant-based micronutrients).

Eat the rainbow AND the alphabet:

fill your plate with a wide variety of brightly coloured fruit & veg. Aim to include 30 different types of fruits and vegetables in your meals over the course of a week. Diversity is key to a healthy gut microbiome (and good hormonal & emotional health).

Minimise refined carbohydrates and junk food (e.g. added sugars, white bread, baked goods, take-aways).

Avoid processed meats and all factory-farmed (intensively-reared) meat, fish, dairy & eggs.

Aim to eat all meals within a 12-hour window e.g. between 7am & 7pm. This helps with weight control.

Recipe/nutrition book recommendations

(many of the authors also have social media accounts worth following):

The Happy Pear: Recipes for Happiness - David & Stephen Flynn

The Oh-She-Glows Cookbook – Angela Liddon

Quick & Easy – Deliciously Ella

The Plant-Power Doctor – Dr Gemma Newman

A Modern Way to Eat – Anna Jones

River Cottage: Much More Veg – Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

The Scottish Vegan Cookbook – Jackie Jones

Bosh! Healthy Vegan – Henry Firth & Ian Theasby

The Green Roasting Tin – Rukmini Iyer

The Plant-Based Diet Revolution – Dr Alan Desmond



Supplements

Recommended for everyone, irrespective of diet (if no specific doses/preparations prescribed by your doctor):

B12

Vitamin B12: Aim for 10 micrograms (mcg) daily or at least 2000 micrograms once a week

D3

Vitamin D3: Aim for 10-20 mcg/400-800 IU October-April (in spring/summer ensure sun exposure to skin on arms/legs/back for at least 20 minutes daily; continue to supplement if not possible)

Iodine

Iodine: RDA 150 mcg daily (important for bone and thyroid health)

Omega 3

Omega 3 Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs): Algae derived (sustainable) combined EPA & DHA (250-500 mg/daily) or 1-2 tbsps of freshly ground flaxseed (e.g. added to cereal/smoothies/salad/soups) and 6 walnut halves daily.

Sleep

Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each night

If you suffer from hot flushes/night sweats, sleep naked or wear cotton nightclothes.

Consider investing in a cold gel pack or cooling pillow. Avoid hot drinks before bed; take sips of cold water instead.

Ensure your bedroom is comfortably cool.

Keep the window slightly open and/or a fan near your bed.

Switch off electronic devices/screens at least one hour before bed and/or consider wearing blue-light blocking glasses in the evening.

Do not consume caffeine (including cola) after midday

Aim to get outside in the morning daylight (whatever the weather) for at least 20 minutes each day.

If this is not possible, try and have your breakfast/morning drink close to a window/in a naturally lit area.

Avoid alcohol before bed;

not only does it reduce good-quality sleep, it is an endocrine (hormone) disrupter and can affect the efficacy of medication, including HRT.

Get up and go to bed at approximately the same time each day, including weekends, to establish a routine.

Avoid smoking.

Nicotine acts as a stimulant and withdrawal can lead to early wakening.

sleepio.com is a digital, evidence-based, CBT programme (available on the NHS in some areas)



Exercise/Movement

Move your body daily – this is important for mental & physical well-being, as well as symptom control.

If you don't already have an exercise regimen, start slowly – even a ten-minute walk around the block has its benefits: [NHS:Active10](#) or consider a five minute morning online yoga session e.g. [Yoga with Adriene](#)

Weight-bearing exercise (e.g. hiking, running, dancing, weight-training, tennis) – at least three times weekly – is essential for bone health after menopause. Swimming and cycling are great forms of exercise for heart health and general well-being, but will not prevent osteoporosis.

Check out the Couch to 5K programme or consider joining your local [Park Run](#) - fantastic not only for exercise, but also community-building, social inclusion and gets you out into nature (which has enormous benefits for our mental health). Do not be put off if you do not run (yet!); many people walk or walk-run around the courses. Children and dogs are welcome too.

Balance and core-strength are increasingly important as we age, and reduce the risk of falling in later life. Another reason to consider a regular yoga practice, or why not sign up to a local/online Pilates or tai chi class?

Stress Reduction/Self Care

5-10 minutes of daily mindfulness meditation/ breathing exercises can provide enormous benefits and lower the stress response:

Insight Timer, Calm and Atom are all meditation apps you can trial for free. Clarity is an app designed specifically with menopause in mind.

Stress reduction is important for all of us and is paramount in managing hormonal upheaval

Take at least 15-30 minutes a day, every day, to do something you enjoy (and solely for you) e.g. reading a novel, gardening, playing an instrument, having a bath with relaxing essential oils, listening to your favourite music/podcast, walking in nature.

Be kind to yourself!

Suggested reading

The 4 Pillar Plan, The Stress Solution and/or **Feel Better in 5:** *Dr Rangan Chatterjee*

Sorted: The Active Woman's Guide to Health: *Dr Juliet McGrattan*

The Gifts of Imperfection: *Brené Brown*

Podcasts for health, wellbeing & inspiration

[Feel Better, Live More](#)
[The Doctor's Kitchen](#)

Try the 21 Day Plant-Based Health Challenge
[Plant-Based Health Professionals UK](#)