

Maintaining a healthy diet and weight

Women gain on average 10 kg between the ages of 40 and 60 years, independently of menopause. Lifestyle factors such as nutrition and physical activity have profound effects on health and menopause symptoms.

A healthy diet

- Maintaining a healthy diet is important to prevent both obesity and the anorexia of aging.
- Diet needs to have a balance of **macronutrients** and **micronutrients**.
- Carbohydrates, protein and fat are **macronutrients**.
- **Micronutrients** include vitamins and minerals.
- A healthy diet consists of frequent small meals, rich in fiber.
- Fat energy should be derived from mono- and polyunsaturated fats.
- Protein sources should be mainly fish, poultry and skimmed dairy products and more rarely red or processed meat.
- Routine intake of micronutrient supplements is not recommended unless a deficiency is documented.
- Most guidelines focus on increasing the intake of plant-based foods, similar to the Mediterranean diet.
- Modest reductions in salt intake have a beneficial effect on blood pressure.

- Weight-reducing diets, usually low in fat (especially saturated fat), with or without exercise advice or programs, may reduce premature all-cause mortality in adults with obesity.
- Weight loss may achieve remission of type II diabetes.

Exercise

- Regular physical activity is key to preventing and helping to manage heart disease, type II diabetes and cancer.
- It also boosts brain health – it reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, slows cognitive decline and improves memory.
- The WHO recommends at least **150 to 300 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity per week for all adults**, including people living with chronic conditions or disability.
- The WHO recommends that those aged 65 years or more add activities which emphasize balance and coordination, as well as muscle strengthening, to help prevent falls and improve health.

Consuming a healthy diet throughout life helps to prevent malnutrition and obesity as well as a range of non-communicable diseases.

Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.

Further information

WHO. Healthy diet 2020 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/healthy-diet>

WHO. Guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behavior 2020 <https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789240015128>