

Menopause and diet:

Diet, weight and exercise

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.

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

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 **macro-nutrients** 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 loss

- 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 2 diabetes

Exercise

- **Regular physical activity** is key to preventing and helping to manage heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer
- It reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, slows cognitive decline and improves memory
- The WHO recommends that all adults, including those living with chronic conditions or disabilities, engage in at least 150–300 minutes of moderate to vigorous **aerobic activity** per week along with muscle-strengthening activities at moderate or greater intensity on two or more days per week
- The WHO recommends that adults aged 65 years or more include activities that emphasize balance, coordination and muscle strengthening, to help prevent **falls** and improve overall health

Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.

Further information

EMAS (2025). CareOnline. Health at menopause and beyond <https://emas-online.org/guidelines-and-education/#emas-care-online>