

Menopause and lifestyle:

Exercise

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines physical activity 'as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure'. Globally, around 31% of adults (1.8 billion) are insufficiently physically active.

Benefits of physical activity

- Maintaining a **healthy body weight**
- Reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer
- Improving **bone and muscle health**
- Reducing the risk of falls and fractures
- Improving sleep, mood and mental health
- Better quality of life

Types of exercise

- **Aerobic** (endurance) exercise – walking, running, cycling to improve heart health and circulation
- **Resistance** (strength) exercise – weights, resistance bands, tai chi to build lean muscle and increase bone density
- **Multi-component training** – combination of aerobic and resistance exercise to improve vasomotor symptoms, inflammation, strength, flexibility and fat reduction
- **Pelvic-floor muscle training** – **menopause** and aging are risk factors for pelvic floor dysfunction, although evidence supporting preventive interventions in older age is of low-quality

Insufficient physical activity is associated with a 20–30% increased risk of all-cause mortality compared with sufficient physical activity.

WHO recommended weekly levels for those aged 18–64 years

- At least 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity **aerobic** physical activity
- Or at least 75–150 minutes of vigorous-intensity **aerobic** physical activity
- Or an equivalent combination of these
- **Muscle-strengthening activities** at moderate or greater intensity involving all major muscle groups on two or more days a week provide additional benefits

Physical activity at the menopause

- Evidence on the effects of exercise on menopausal vasomotor symptoms is mixed
- Exercise should be undertaken to maximize bone strength and reduce the risk of **falls**

AI-based approaches and wearable devices tracking physical activity may be helpful.

Further information

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

International Menopause Society (2025). The role of lifestyle medicine in menopausal health factsheet 2. Physical activity and menopause <https://www.imsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/WMD-2025-Factsheet-Physical-Activitiy.pdf>

NICE (2021). Pelvic floor dysfunction prevention and non-surgical management <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng210/resources/pelvic-floor-dysfunction-prevention-and-nonsurgical-management-pdf-66143768482501>