



## DIETETICS

## Women's health advice from a Lead Dietitian

By Ella Monaghan, OSCAR Care Group Lead Dietitian

### Menopause

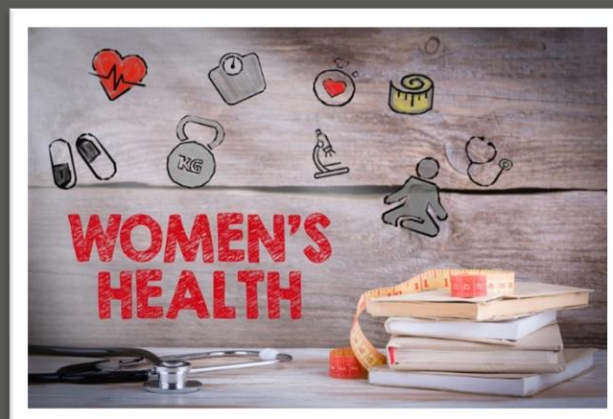
Menopause is known as the end of a woman's monthly menstrual cycle, otherwise known as a period and officially occurs 12 months after your last period. In Australia, the average age of menopause is 51 years and generally occurs around the ages of 45 – 55 years. Menopause can commence earlier in some women.

Menopause occurs when the female hormones oestrogen and progesterone are produced in the ovaries at a slower rate. Once these hormone levels fall below a certain point, your ovaries stop releasing an egg and your periods stop.

### Symptoms

Common symptoms a woman will experience during menopause may include:

- Weight gain
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Night sweats
- Reduced concentration
- Hot flushes
- Weakening of bones
- Changes to cholesterol levels
- Increased blood pressure
- Weight Gain



### Weight Gain

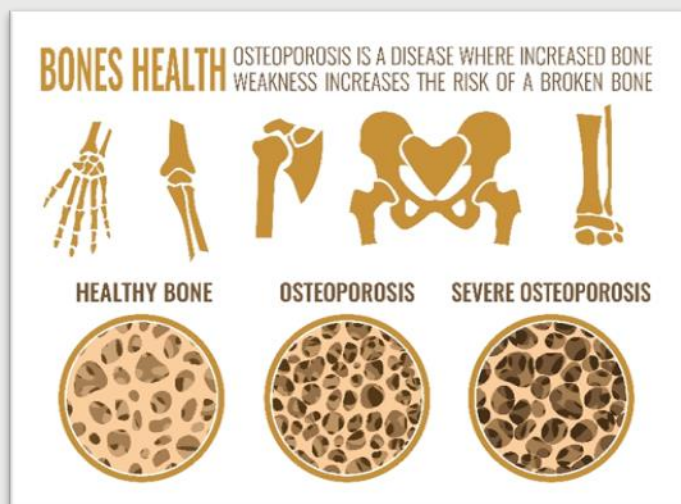
Weight gain is a common concern amongst women experiencing menopause and I often hear women say, "my whole-body shape has changed". Our muscle mass decreases as we age, which results in a reduction of our metabolism therefore often resulting in weight gain during the time of menopause.

The distribution of body fat changes during menopause as fat which was typically stored around the hips and bottom is now positioned around the stomach region.

## Bone Health

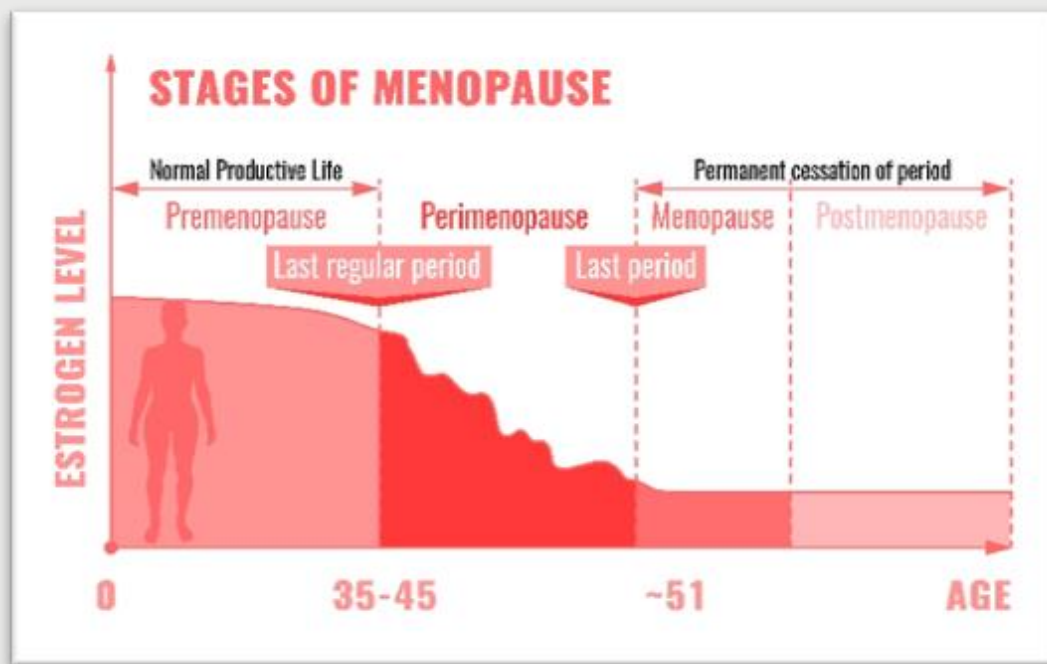
The development of Osteoporosis (weak bones) occurs commonly in women after menopause as the rate of calcium loss increases during this time as a result of the decreasing levels of oestrogen.

It is important that women consume adequate serves of calcium per day in the form of low fat dairy. Vitamin D is also very important for ensuring healthy bones – try exposing to your skin to sunlight each day, it is recommended that a few minutes in the sun during the mid-morning or mid-afternoon is sufficient for vitamin D levels.



## Heart Health

After menopause women have an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease due to the reduction of the hormone oestrogen. The risk of cardiovascular disease is also associated with an increase in blood pressure and changes to cholesterol levels as the 'bad' fat called LDL increases and the 'good' protective fat HDL decreases.



## Women's Health Strategies

- Choose low fat dairy and sufficient serves of calcium per day
- Reduce intake of saturated fats (e.g. cakes, biscuits, pies, coconut oil, processed meat, chips and ghee)
- Increase consumption of healthy 'good' fats such as olive oil, avocado, oily fish, unsalted nuts/seeds
- Increase your fibre intake (e.g. wholegrain breads, cereal, wholemeal pasta, oats, lentils/legumes)
- Aim for 2 serves of oily fish per week (e.g. sardines, mackerel, tuna, salmon)
- Do not added extra salt to your meals
- Engage in regular exercise for 30–45 minutes most days of the week
- Reduce caffeine intake and limit alcoholic drinks (aim for 1–2 standard drinks or less per day)
- Increase your vegetable intake – aim for at least ½ plate of vegetables or salad at lunch and dinner
- Aim for 2 pieces of fruit per day.



### Need to establish a plan to improve a resident's health & dietary needs?

This article was written by OSCAR Hospitality Lead Dietitian, Ella Monaghan. Please call or email our Dietitians via our contact details below.



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