Taming The Transition
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Director of Nutrition Education

- PhD
  - Nutrition with a concentration in Exercise Science
- Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist (RDN)
- Quit tenured University position to follow this crazy dream :)
- CrossFitter, runner, yogi, strongman
- Mother of 2
- Passionate about women’s health, nutrition and fitness
Karen Blankenship

- PN Certified Nutrition
- Currently getting MNU Nutrition certification
- Healthcare background
- Running Coach
- Swimmer, runner, crossfitter, full IM distance finisher
- Mother of 2 (22 and 17!)
- Post - Menopausal
Tony Acevedo

- Ph.D. Student
- Certifications, CISSN, PN, CSCS
- Adjunct Nutrition Professor
- Wrote my thesis on Menopause, and currently writing a book called Muscles over Menopause
- I will be doing my dissertation on the Effects of Exercise on Bone Mineral Density in Menopausal Woman.
Nutrition coaching company

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Topics We’ll Cover

- Overview of menopause
  - What it is, commonly experienced symptoms
- How diet, exercise, and lifestyle behaviors can impact common symptoms
- Practical advice for managing weight changes during the menopausal transition
- Advice about what has worked for our members
Menopause Basics
What Is Menopause/The Menopause Transition

● Refers to 3 stages
  ○ Perimenopause
    ■ Time when hormones start to shift and move towards menopause.
      ● Estrogen and progesterone decline
    ■ Symptoms described as “menopause” are the strongest
  ○ Menopause
    ■ No menstrual period for 12 months. Ovaries have stopped releasing estrogen and progesterone
  ○ Postmenopause
    ■ After menopause occurs
    ■ Some symptoms may lighten up, others may stick around
Common Symptoms

- Irregular periods
- Incontinence/frequent urination
- Vaginal dryness/painful sex/lowered sex drive
- Breast tenderness
- Fluctuating mood
  - Depression, stress, anxiety
- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Fatigue
- Bloating, flatulence
- Migraines and severe headaches
- Weight gain, change body shape

- Other health conditions
  - Loss of muscle mass
  - Reduced bone density
  - Increased risk of cardiovascular disease

Image - https://www.healthline.com/health/menopause/hrt-effects-on-body
Hormones Involved

- **Estrogen**
  - Roles
    - Promotes the growth and health of the female reproductive system
    - Helps to form serotonin
    - Bone formation
    - Anabolic hormone - muscle mass building
  - Ovarian production ceases
    - Fluctuates, not a straight path
      - Unpredictable symptoms
    - Main driver for most menopausal symptoms

- **Progesterone**
  - Roles
    - Promotes pregnancy
    - Has a calming effect - reduces anxiety, mood swings, irritability
  - Ovarian production ceases

Image: https://www.precisionnutrition.com/feel-your-best-during-menopause
Weight Gain During The Menopause Transition
Energy Balance

Diet | How It Works | Why It Works
---|---|---
Macro Counting/IIFYM | Track and eat a specific amount of each macro (carbs, fat, protein) | Creates a calorie deficit
Keto Diet | Eat almost 0 carbs, high fat and moderate protein | Creates a calorie deficit
Intermittent Fasting | Eat for only a certain number of hours per day | Creates a calorie deficit
Paleo Diet | Eat no processed food or dairy | Creates a calorie deficit
Low Carb Diet/Atkins | Eat high protein, moderate fat, low carb | Creates a calorie deficit
Weight Watchers | Eat a certain number of “points” that represent an amount of food | Creates a calorie deficit

https://myobrain.com/nutrition-essentials/meal-frequency-energy-balance
Weight Gain Is Common

- Most women (90%) gain weight during the menopause transition
- Average weight gained ~ 1-2lb per year
- Weight gain is likely an effect of time rather than specifically menopause
  - Weight gain occurs at similar rates in women of the same age, regardless of menopausal status
  - Loss of lean body mass (muscle)

Why Are Women Gaining Weight?

● The are a lot of reasons

● Gain in fat mass is caused by eating/drinking more calories than the body is expending

● Why?
  ○ Eating more
    ■ Stress, sleep issues, alcohol
  ○ Moving less consistently
    ■ Time priorities, stress, sleep
  ○ Symptoms associated with menopause make it challenging to prioritize health, nutrition and exercise
Increased Hunger

- Changes in hormone levels during perimenopause
  - Ghrelin increases hunger
    - Increases → higher levels of hunger
  - Leptin decreases hunger
    - Decreases → feel less full
  - Estrogen decreases hunger

- Feel more hungry and less full
  - Can lead to overeating

Weight Distribution

● High cortisol levels and higher testosterone to estrogen ratio encourage
  ○ Visceral fat storage, particularly in the stomach
  ○ More of an apple then pear shaped figure
  ■ Increased risk for cardiovascular disease

Other Reasons Scale Might Be Up

- Scale weight changes do not always mean body fat changes
- Common causes in menopause
  - Changes in hormones and/or medications
    - Bloating
    - Gas
    - Water retention
Food and Nutrition
Nutrition and Eating Tips

- To ensure you are eating a nutritionally adequate and satisfying diet that helps with weight management, focus on the following:

  - Moderate overall calorie intake
    - Tracking food intake
    - Focus on eating when hungry, stopping when full, eating slowly, reducing snacking

  - Consume adequate protein
    - Eat protein at every meal
    - If tracking - aim for at least 1.6g/kg of your body weight per day
    - Helps reduce lean body mass loss
Nutrition and Eating Tips, con’t

- Make most of your plate fruits, veggies and complex carbs
- Eat healthy fats
  - Don’t avoid!
- Stay hydrated
- Limit alcohol intake

Some of the ways alcohol may impact your progress include:
- Alcohol has calories (7 calories per gram) so must be accounted for when tracking your food and beverage intake.
- It’s metabolized differently than food and temporarily reduces the breakdown of fat.
- It has a negative impact on sleep.
- It can impact our ability to make the best food decisions when consumed.
Exercise and Movement
Exercise Tips

- All movement is encouraged
- Strength training
  - Reduce muscle and bone loss
  - At LEAST 2x/week working every major muscle group
- Moderate-intensity aerobic activity
- Daily movement
  - Non-exercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT)

Stress and Sleep
Stress

- Hormones and habits related to stress can both have a large impact
- Stress management techniques
  - Regular exercise, walking
  - Balanced diet
  - Meditation, yoga
  - Sleep
- Positive mindset
Sleep

- Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep per night

- Sleep
  - Reduces hunger
  - Reduces stress
  - Allows for better decision making

- Common menopause specific sleep interruptions
  - Hot flashes - reduce caffeine and hot beverages
  - Night sweats
  - Difficulty falling and staying asleep
Hormone Replacement Therapy
Hormone Replacement Therapy

- Needs to be an individual decision made between you and your doctor
- For most, it is safe and effective
  - There are exceptions
- Can have a benefits related to
  - Reducing menopausal symptoms
  - Long-term health
    - Cardiovascular disease risk
    - Osteoporosis
    - All-cause mortality
Tying It All Together
In Summary

● The menopause transition can be a challenging time for many women

● You can feel your best through making specific lifestyle choices

● Weight gain is NOT inevitable!

● Eating well and staying active can help reduce some symptoms AND help you manage your weight
Looking for support?

- Awareness and accountability are key for making changes
- Get an objective look at your habits
- Envision and achieve success!
Thank You!

Looking for more information?

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