

MENOPAUSE

WHAT IS IT?

Menopause marks the time of the end of menstrual cycles. Perimenopause and menopause often begin in the late 40s, however, timing varies from person-to-person. Estrogen production decreases, resulting in a decline in the frequency of menses, and eventual cessation of menstruation. The decline in estrogen can impact bone health, cause changes in body composition, and reduce muscle mass. Common symptoms of menopause include hot flashes, low energy, sleep disturbances, vaginal dryness, and mood changes.

GENTLE NUTRITION SUGGESTIONS

Follow as you are able.

- Eat regular meals and snacks to ensure you're getting enough energy and protein to meet your body's needs and maintain muscle mass.
- Include food sources of calcium, which helps your body build and maintain bones. High calcium sources include dairy foods (milk, cheese, yogurt), fortified orange juice, non-dairy milks and soy products as well as leafy greens.
- Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. Some foods contain small amounts of vitamin D, but more is made by our bodies during exposure to the sun. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about a vitamin D supplement if you don't get regular sun exposure.
- Staying hydrated and eating plant-based proteins, especially soy, may help mitigate hot flashes. Research suggests that isoflavones, chemicals naturally found in soy, act similarly to estrogen in the body and may help reduce menopause symptoms.
- Caffeine and spicy foods may worsen hot flashes, so exploring how reducing these items impacts your symptoms could be helpful.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regular physical activity can help you retain muscle mass and bone density as you age. Choose something you enjoy! Some examples are walking, hiking, jogging, dancing, tennis, yoga, or climbing stairs.
- Smoking and excess alcohol intake both increase rates of bone loss, so quitting smoking and limiting alcohol intake is suggested.

*Do not engage in any of these suggestions if they are harmful to other aspects of your health.

REMEMBER

We are imperfect beings and each day is new and different. Some days it may be easier to follow the suggestions than others. Be gentle with yourself.

GOAL

Self-compassion and kindness towards your body.

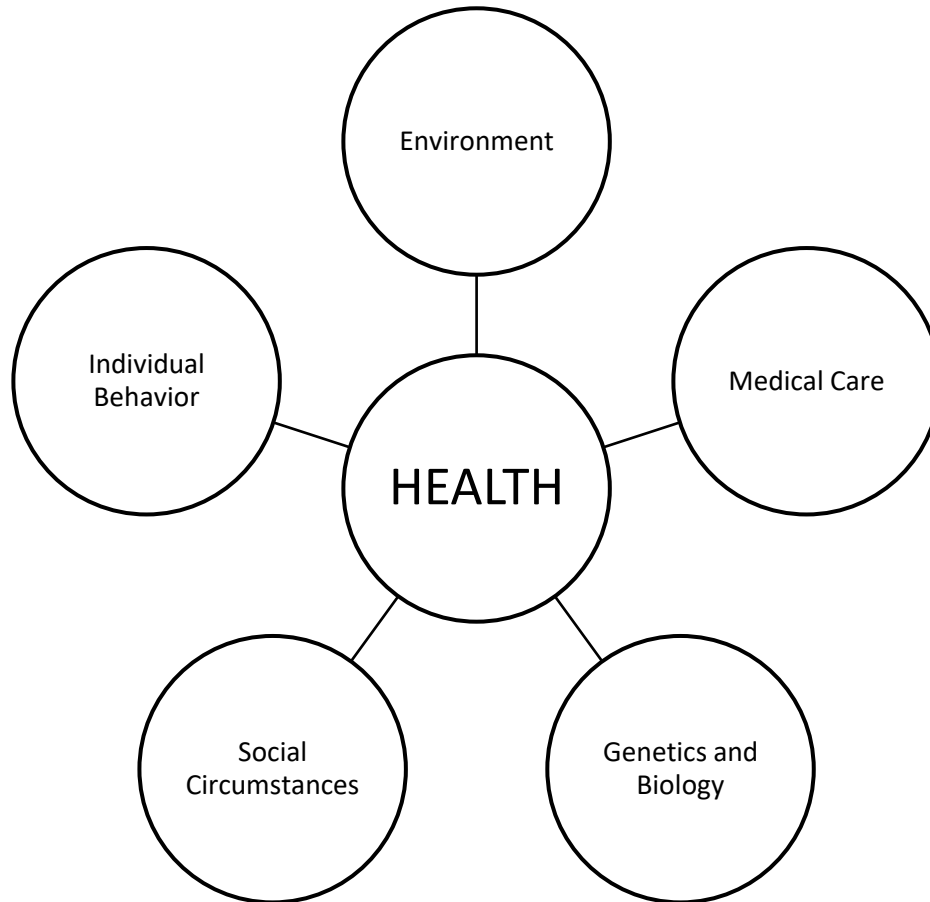
EVERY BODY IS DIFFERENT

There are a spectrum of symptoms and reactions. If any food or movement recommendations do not feel right for your body, trust that! It may be helpful to talk more about this with your dietitian.

TOTAL HEALTH

Health is complex and is influenced by many factors. Not all factors are within your control.

It is important to consider all these factors, not just individual behaviors, when exploring ways to address your health.



REMINDER:

This health condition is not your fault!

Discuss causes and risk factors with your doctor or registered dietitian if you are interested.

Image Description: A series of circles with Health labeled in the center circle. There are five additional circles surrounding the center circle each one connected to the center with a line. The surrounding circles are labeled: Environment, Medical Care, Genetics and Biology, Social Circumstances, and Individual Behavior.

REFERENCES

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Wolfram T. Eating Right During Menopause. EatRight. 2019. <https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/healthy-aging/eating-right-during-menopause>. Accessed February 14, 2020.

DISCLAIMERS

Handout created by Carly Renner, Bastyr University Dietetic Intern and reviewed by Meghan Cichy, Registered Dietitian. Template design by Elisabeth Kelsey, Bastyr Dietetic Intern.

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