

## DIET & LIFESTYLE ADVICE

Try to eat organic, locally sourced food where possible.

- 1. Include plenty of fresh vegetables & fruit:** Think 'rainbow diet' (lots of different colours).
- 2. Ensure adequate protein intake:** Foods that are moderately high in low-fat protein include fish, lean meat, eggs, low-fat yoghurt, nuts & seeds, tofu, quinoa, beans & pulses including soya. (Soya is a rich source of phyto-oestrogens, which have a hormone-balancing effect.)
- 3. Restrict/exclude cow dairy products (milk, cheese), especially full fat:** Go for low fat, or ideally replace with soya, rice, almond, oat milks, goat and sheep cheeses.
- 4. Eat plenty of non-dairy calcium-rich foods for good bone health and to reduce the risk of osteoporosis, which increases at menopause. Non-dairy, calcium-rich foods include:**
  - Leafy green vegetables (especially cabbage, spinach, kale, beet tops, parsley, broccoli, okra, lettuce)
  - Seeds, especially sesame found in tahini & hummus, and sunflower
  - Nuts, especially almonds and walnuts
  - Avocado, olives, onion
  - Fish, especially canned sardines and salmon with bones
  - Lentils & beans, soya products
  - Dried fruits (especially figs, dates, raisins, apricots, currants)
  - Tofu
- 5. Include a good level of complex carbohydrates in your diet:** These help balance hormonal function and maintain energy levels/combat fatigue and help us cope with stress. They do this by helping to keep blood sugar levels steady. Having a carb-rich snack (see bottom of page for examples) can help maintain blood sugar levels for up to 3 hours. Go for wholemeal/wholegrain (as opposed to white) flour, bread, pasta and rice. Wholegrain is broken down more slowly by the body, and therefore the sugars are absorbed into the bloodstream more slowly. Porridge oats are another good source of complex carbohydrates. Excluding wheat or gluten from your diet, and replacing with alternative sources of complex carbohydrates, can sometimes be helpful.
- 6. Ensure your diet is low in saturated fat, salt and refined sugar:** Avoid processed food, ready meals, takeaways, fried food, cakes, pastries, sweets. Sweeten foods, if necessary, with small amounts of honey, ideally organic and locally produced.
- 7. Increase intake of unsaturated fats (omega 3 EFAs):** Oily fish, nuts & seeds, avocados, extra virgin olive oil. These help balance emotions, mood and hormones, and play an important part in maintaining healthy skin and cardiovascular function.
- 8. Drink plenty of water, white, green & herbal teas to aid detoxification:** 2-3 litres of total fluid/day. Bottled or filtered water.
- 9. Exercise regularly:** Including weight-bearing exercise.
- 10. Reduce stress levels as much as possible:** Learn, practice and indulge in relaxation techniques such as meditation, massage, yoga.

## IN GENERAL

- Alcohol and caffeine, excess salt, sugar and a sedentary lifestyle all increase the rate at which minerals are lost from bone and excreted in urine. These minerals include calcium, magnesium, potassium and zinc, and vitamins A, C and the B complex, which contribute to maintaining bone density, the immune system, healthy skin, hormone metabolism and balance, and emotional/psychological wellbeing.
- Alcohol, coffee, nicotine, sugar and stress all contribute to increased cortisol levels in the body. Cortisol competes with progesterone and can increase oestrogen dominance, which can exacerbate menopausal symptoms.
- Post-menopausal women who smoke fracture bones more often than non-smokers.
- Smoking hugely increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Endorphins (feel-good hormones) are lowered by stress, boosted by exercise.
- Include as many phyto-oestrogens as possible to help reduce menopausal symptoms including hot flushes, vaginal dryness and low bone density. These are found in foods such as soy products including tofu and tempeh, and other legumes (beans, peas & lentils), many nuts, seeds (particularly flaxseed), grains and berries and other fruits. Soy is particularly recommended for improving BMD.
- The body's response to hormones is also controlled by prostaglandins, which are derived from essential fats in the diet. The best dietary sources of essential fat are seeds and fish.
- Menopausal women have an increased risk of osteoporosis, but dietary and lifestyle factors can do a lot to reduce this risk. These include eating more seeds, nuts and dark green leafy vegetables for calcium and other minerals, instead of dairy produce which is high in oestrogenic hormones (and can contribute to oestrogen dominance). A heaped tablespoon of ground seeds a day provides plenty of calcium, magnesium and other essential nutrients.
- Regular weight-bearing exercise is important for maintaining bone density. Just walking for 15 minutes a day can make a difference. Regular exercise has also been shown to reduce the frequency and severity of hot flushes. It's also a great way to relieve stress and boost mood.

## CARB-RICH SNACKS!

- Fruit & vegetables (particularly bananas and berries)
- Rice cakes, oat cakes, rye bread, wholegrain bread
- Hummus, peanut butter (w/o sugar)
- Low-fat yoghurt (w/o sugar)
- Nuts and seeds (low carb but rich in healthy fats & protein)
- Energy bars (low sugar)