

The background of the entire page is a soft, out-of-focus image of pink cherry blossoms with yellow centers. The text is overlaid on this background.

HORMONE BALANCE

and

WEIGHT LOSS

**A GUIDE FOR WOMEN IN
PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE**

Welcome



Your Journey to a Healthier, Happier You Starts Here!

Welcome, we're glad you're here! As women who have navigated both perimenopause and menopause, we understand how challenging this time in a woman's life can be. Discomfort experienced from hormonal changes can affect everything from how your body feels to your mental state. Fortunately, there are things you can do to help ease your symptoms and put you on a path toward feeling like yourself again!

In this guide, you'll find:

- Strategies to help balance your hormones naturally
- Practical methods to start losing stubborn menopause body fat
- Tips on how to ease menopause symptoms

This guide offers just a small glimpse into the various ways being on a balanced, plant-based diet can be beneficial for menopause. To gain even more insight, visit us at [Balanced by Plants](#). There you'll find recipes, tips, and more.

Contents

1. Understanding Your Hormones	04
2. Menopause Weight Gain: What's Really Going On	08
3. Benefits of a Plant-Based Diet for Menopause	13
4. Eleven Daily Habits for Weight Loss in Menopause	21
5. Hormone-Friendly Meal Ideas & Supplements	28



1. Understanding Your Hormones



Let's talk hormones! Whether you're here because you've recently started having perimenopause symptoms...or you've already come out the other side and are still struggling with weight fluctuations or other hormonal challenges...we're here to offer support and guidance.

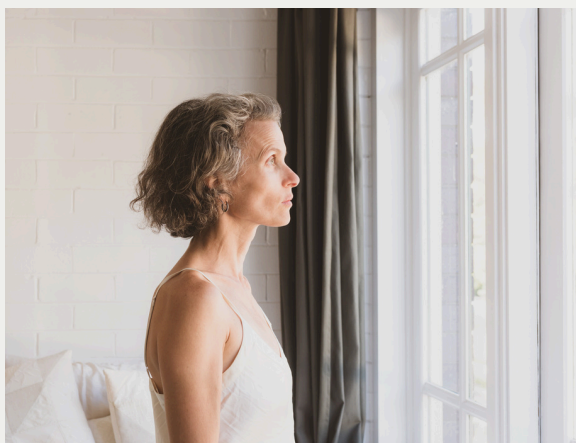
It's normal to feel frustrated as you start to experience some of the more unpleasant aspects of your changing body. Having a good understanding of your hormones allows you to see why these changes are happening and what you can do to help.

Menopause is the time in a woman's life when her menstrual cycle has stopped for at least twelve consecutive months. During perimenopause (the time leading up to menopause), hormone levels begin to fluctuate, causing a variety of symptoms that can be uncomfortable and make everyday tasks feel more difficult. We'll explore three primary hormones that take center stage in menopause-related symptoms:

Estrogen is responsible for many processes in a woman's body, including reproductive health, female development, bone health, brain function, and cardiovascular processes. During perimenopause, levels begin to rise and fall dramatically, causing night sweats, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, anxiety, and irritability.

Progesterone contributes to cycle regularity, maintaining a healthy pregnancy, and mood regulation. As it declines, it may bring about irregular periods leading to heavy bleeding, light months, or even skipped periods. It also plays a role in mood swings.

Another hormone shift that may surprise you is a drop in testosterone during menopause. Decreased libido, loss in muscle mass, and bone loss can be attributed to a dip in testosterone for women.



Perimenopause and Menopause Symptoms

The most difficult part of the menopause journey is the discomfort of all the changes your body is going through. Although symptoms can vary from person to person, the following are the most common:

- **Hot flashes and night sweats:** This can be a sudden feeling of heat that radiates through your entire body, feeling flushed, or sweating while you sleep.
- **Sleep disturbances:** Hormonal changes, night sweats, and anxiety can make falling asleep or staying asleep more difficult.
- **Mood changes:** When hormones fluctuate, it may trigger irritability or depression.

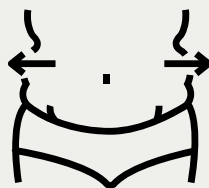
- **Weight gain and slowed metabolism:** A drop in estrogen can cause your body to store fat, especially around the abdomen.
- **Loss of muscle mass and bone density:** Losing muscle mass is an unfortunate side effect of declining estrogen. Aging women are also at risk of developing osteoporosis.
- **Skin and hair changes:** Thinner skin, dryness, and hair thinning or loss are common with slower collagen production.
- **Digestive issues and bloating:** Research points to hormones playing a role in gut health.
- **Brain fog:** Trouble focusing, remembering, or staying sharp may also be influenced by hormonal fluctuations.

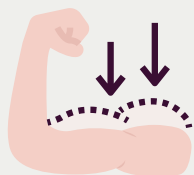


2. *Menopause Weight Gain: What's Really Going On?*

One of the biggest concerns women in menopause have is excess body fat, particularly around the midsection. It can be especially frustrating for women who have not changed their eating or exercise habits, yet the number on the scale seems to creep up. Many women also find that what they have done in the past to lose weight no longer works for them after menopause.

Unfortunately, this change is largely due to the natural decline in estrogen. This can cause the metabolism to slow down, meaning fewer calories are burned at rest.

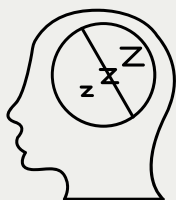




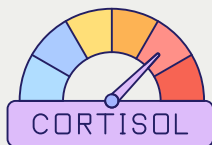
These hormonal shifts are often accompanied by a **loss in muscle mass**. Since muscle burns more calories than fat, this makes a huge impact on a woman's metabolism.



Many women report having **sleep issues** in perimenopause and menopause due to night sweats, hot flashes, and insomnia. Lack of adequate sleep can affect appetite-regulating hormones, like ghrelin and leptin. This can make cravings feel even more intense, making it easy to overeat.



Stress also contributes to weight gain. Cortisol is elevated when stress levels are high. This can influence abdominal fat storage and cause further emotional eating.



Why Some Women Struggle to Lose Weight Despite Being in a Calorie Deficit

Women in menopause may find it difficult to lose weight, even when they appear to be doing everything right. This is not just about willpower or discipline; it's about how the body responds to hormones, stress, and diet. Listed here are a few reasons a calorie deficit might not lead to fat loss, and what you can do to get things moving in the right direction.

1. Stress & Hormonal Imbalance

- Things like poor sleep, undereating, over-exercising, or emotional stress can raise cortisol, causing weight gain, particularly in the abdominal area
- Underactive thyroid (commonly caused by hormone fluctuations in perimenopause)
- Insulin sensitivity thanks to declining estrogen and progesterone can trigger fat storage
- Loss of muscle as we age lowers our resting metabolic rate, meaning we use fewer calories at rest than we used to



2. Inconsistent or Inaccurate Calorie Deficit

- Overeating without realizing due to hormone-induced cravings (especially if a tracking app is not used)
- Undereating all day, then overeating in the evening or at night (triggering hunger hormone and causing overconsumption)
- Inaccurate calculation of your calorie needs, or inaccuracy in the tracking app
- Overdoing it on weekends or weeknights without being aware of it (“canceling out” the deficit)

3. Not Consuming Enough Calories

- Diets that are too low in calories for your body’s specific needs may trigger adaptive thermogenesis (causing metabolism to slow)
- Eating too few calories can cause an increase in ghrelin (hunger hormone) and a decrease in leptin (fullness hormone)
- Being in too much of a calorie deficit can cause muscle loss, further slowing down your metabolism



The good news is despite these obstacles, weight loss during menopause can be achieved.

Support your hormones by eating a nutrient-rich, plant-based diet high in fiber, plant-based protein, and healthy fats. Also, try not to skip meals! This helps stabilize blood sugar, reduces inflammation, aids in digestion, and fires up your metabolism.

Exercise regularly by doing strength training (to preserve and improve muscle mass) and cardio (to boost your metabolism). Weight lifting, yoga, or Pilates are great for strength training. For cardiovascular activity, keep it simple by doing things like walking, swimming, elliptical, or cycling.

Managing stress, getting adequate sleep, and prioritizing self-care are equally important.

3. Benefits of a Plant-Based Diet for Menopause

A plant-based diet rich in whole, minimally processed foods can be especially beneficial for women in perimenopause and menopause. Nutritious plant-powered foods can help with hormone balance and ease symptoms such as hot flashes, mood swings, and sleep issues.

Hormone fluctuations increase the risk of developing heart disease and osteoporosis. The long-term benefits of a well-planned plant-forward diet can aid in protection from these health concerns and allow you to thrive into the next chapter of life!

Read on for specific ways in which these foods can help, what foods to focus on, and full lists of examples.











- **Phytoestrogens** are natural plant compounds that mimic estrogen and may help ease menopause symptoms like hot flashes. These compounds are found in soy, lentils, and flaxseed.
- **Fiber** aids in digestion and blood sugar regulation and is found in whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables.
- **Antioxidants** help protect your cells from damage and are found in fruits and vegetables.
- **Healthy fats** reduce inflammation and help with skin hydration and hormone production. Consume healthy fats in nuts, seeds, and avocados.

Other benefits of a plant-based diet include a lower risk for health concerns such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.



Foods That Support Your Hormones

Flaxseeds  High in lignans (a type of phytoestrogen) and omega-3s to support hormone balance and reduce inflammation.	Chickpeas, lentils, edamame, and tofu  Rich in plant-based protein and phytoestrogens that may relieve some menopausal symptoms.
Leafy greens like kale, spinach, & Swiss chard  Provide calcium, magnesium, and folate to support bones and mood.	Berries  Packed with antioxidants that support brain health, skin, and heart function.
Whole grains  Oats, quinoa, and brown rice supply energy and B vitamins for nervous system support.	Nuts and seeds  Offer healthy fats and minerals like zinc, selenium, and magnesium.
Fermented foods  Tempeh, miso, sauerkraut, and kimchi nourish gut bacteria, which play a key role in hormone metabolism.	Cruciferous Vegetables  Broccoli, Cauliflower, & Brussel Sprouts contain compounds that support liver detoxification and balance estrogen metabolism.

Four Key Food Categories

A well-balanced plant-based diet helps support hormone balance, stable energy, and weight management during menopause. Here are four key food categories to focus on:

Plant-Based Protein

Protein is important for muscle repair and bone health. It's important for women in menopause to consume protein to protect muscle mass and to increase feelings of fullness.

Examples:



- Lentils (red, green, brown, black)
- Chickpeas
- Black beans
- Kidney beans
- Pinto beans
- Edamame (young soybeans)
- Tofu (firm, soft, or silken)
- Tempeh
- Mung beans
- Split peas
- Seitan (wheat gluten)
- Hemp seeds
- Chia seeds
- Flaxseeds
- Sunflower seeds
- Pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
- Quinoa
- Vegan Protein Powder
- Unsweetened nut and seed butters (almond, sunflower, tahini)



Complex Carbohydrates

Fiber-rich, complex carbohydrates are the body's primary source of energy, helping with blood sugar regulation, gut, and heart health.

Examples:

Whole Grains:

- Quinoa
- Brown rice
- Oats (steel-cut or rolled)
- Farro
- Millet
- Barley
- Buckwheat
- Teff
- Amaranth
- Whole grain pasta or bread (e.g., sprouted grain, brown rice)



Starchy Vegetables:

- Sweet potatoes
- White Potatoes
- Winter squash (butternut, acorn, kabocha)
- Pumpkin
- Beets
- Parsnips
- Corn
- Green peas
- Plantains

Fiber-Rich Fruits:

- Apples (with skin)
- Pears
- Berries (raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, blueberries)
- Bananas (especially slightly green for resistant starch)
- Grapefruit
- Cherries
- Kiwi
- Plums
- Peaches
- Nectarines
- Pomegranate



Non-Starchy Vegetables

These vegetables are low in calories but high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants that support detoxification, gut health, and hormone balance. Aim for at least 3–5 servings per day with a variety of colors.

Examples:

Leafy Greens:

- Kale
- Spinach
- Arugula
- Romaine
- Collards
- Swiss chard
- Dandelion greens

Cruciferous Vegetables:

- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Bok choy

Other Non-Starchy Veggies:

- Zucchini
- Bell peppers
- Asparagus
- Mushrooms
- Tomatoes
- Onions
- Garlic
- Cucumbers
- Celery
- Green beans
- Carrots



Healthy Fats

Healthy fats are essential for hormone production, brain function, and nutrient absorption. Including the right fats in your diet also helps with feeling satisfied after a meal and having a stable mood.

Examples:

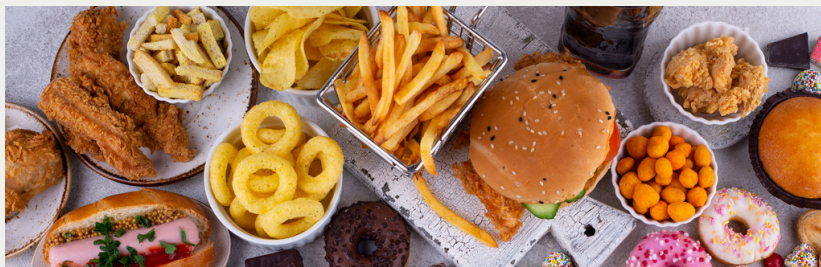
- Avocados
- Olives
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Flaxseed oil
- Chia seeds
- Hemp seeds
- Ground flaxseeds
- Walnuts
- Almonds
- Cashews
- Brazil nuts
- Tahini
- Nut Butters
- Coconut (in moderation)



Foods to Limit or Avoid

For blood sugar and weight management, here is a list of foods to either avoid, or eat in moderation:

- **Processed foods:** have added sugar, sodium, and preservatives
- **Refined carbohydrates:** includes white bread, cereals, and pastries; causes blood sugar spikes and cravings
- **Added Sugar:** blood sugar and insulin spikes encourage fat storage and can lead to insulin resistance
- **Alcohol:** high in calories; may cause sleep disturbances and hot flashes
- **Caffeine:** large amounts can cause anxiety and sleep issues
- **Fried and greasy foods:** high in trans fats and calories
- **Artificial sweeteners and additives:** can have a negative impact on gut health and increase cravings



4. *Eleven Daily Habits for Weight Loss in Menopause*

Now that your hormones are shifting and changing, losing weight in perimenopause and menopause may seem a lot more challenging. But that doesn't mean it's impossible. With the right combination of menopause-friendly lifestyle changes, you will be well on your way to feeling stronger, healthier, and more confident.

These eleven daily habits are here to help get you started. In this list, you'll find simple strategies built to assist you in balancing your hormones, boosting your metabolism, and beginning to shift your body from storing fat to releasing it.

A well-designed hormone-friendly weight loss plan ensures that every aspect of your life plays a part in supporting your hormones, not just what you eat!



1. Balance Your Hormones on a Plant-Based Diet

A wholesome plant-based diet has certain compounds that help balance hormones and ease menopause symptoms. For example, foods like tofu, tempeh, and flaxseeds are phytoestrogen-rich, mimicking estrogen and reducing hot flashes. Fiber-rich foods are important for a healthy gut.

- Ask yourself: Do I eat enough of a variety of hormone-friendly plant foods?
- Action Step: Prioritize eating plenty of wholesome plant food that contains protein, fiber, healthy fats, and phytoestrogens. (See pages 16-19 for full food lists.)



2. Eat Meals that Balance Your Blood Sugar

Blood sugar spikes from processed food, refined carbohydrates, and added sugar (like desserts, cookies, or pastries) can encourage fat storage and trigger cravings.

- Ask yourself: Are my meals balanced and keeping me full for at least 3-4 hours?
- Action Step: Aim to build meals that include a balance of high-quality plant protein, healthy fats, and fiber. This will help ensure your blood sugar remains stable and you are full and satisfied between meals. **Find all of our hormone-friendly recipes that tick all the boxes here.**





3. Strength Train to Preserve Muscle

Think of strength training as the fountain of youth.

Building muscle protects your metabolism from slowing down. Muscle loss due to lower estrogen is one of the primary issues that causes fat storage for women in menopause.

- Ask yourself: Am I carving out time to strength train at least twice per week?
- Action Step: Make it a goal to train (weight lifting, free weights, bands, or body weight resistance) for 20 to 30 minutes 2-3 days per week.

4. Prioritize Protein at Every Meal

Protein is important for building and maintaining muscle, especially as you age. Estrogen depletion can cause muscle loss, thereby slowing your metabolism.

- Ask yourself: Am I eating enough protein at every meal for my body weight and activity level?
- Action Step: Include at least 20-30 grams of healthy plant-based protein at every meal. This will help preserve muscle mass and accelerate your metabolism to promote fat loss. Learn more about women's protein needs [here](#). (See page 16 for a list of plant-based protein options.)

5. Practice Stress Management

Another problem many women face is high cortisol due to high stress. Cortisol puts your body in a state of “fight or flight,” promoting fat storage by putting a pause on other bodily functions, slowing your metabolism, and making it more likely you’ll have cravings.

- Ask yourself: How much time do I take out for myself every day to manage stress?
- Action Step: Begin implementing practices that allow you to relax. Spend time outdoors, go for a leisurely walk, deep breathing, meditation, or yoga. Pro-tip: Exercise (strength training and cardio) is a great way to release stress.



6. Think of Sleep as a Weight Loss Tool

Sleep is essential for the recovery of muscles after strength training and for hormone balance. It also helps with stress management. Not getting adequate rest increases hunger and makes it more difficult to manage your weight.

- Ask yourself: Am I prioritizing a good bedtime ritual?
- Action Step: Set your bedtime routine to start at the same time every night (if possible). Turn off screens an hour before bed, take magnesium, drink calming tea, or try listening to relaxing music if you have trouble falling asleep.

7. Hydrate with Intention

Not only does thirst mimic hunger, but drinking plenty of fluids aids in digesting fiber-rich plant-based foods, especially as you transition to a more plant-forward lifestyle.

- Ask yourself: Do I really feel hungry, or am I actually thirsty? How much water have I had today?
- Action Step: Track your fluid intake by writing it down in a journal or tracking app. Consume more fluids by having water, herbal tea, or clear broth. Add fresh fruit to water for added flavor.



8. Be Mindful of Alcohol

Alcohol may actually worsen menopause symptoms, such as hot flashes and night sweats. This has to do with how your liver metabolizes alcohol. Empty calories and added sugar from alcoholic beverages can impact your weight loss efforts and cause mindless snacking.

- Ask yourself: How much alcohol do I really drink per week? Are there other ways I can find to relax?
- Action Step: Reduce alcohol intake a little at a time and notice how much it impacts your energy. Find alternatives to alcohol. For example, replace it with herbal teas or a delicious smoothie.

9. Notice Emotional & Habitual Eating

Being more mindful about your eating habits means noticing how you feel when you eat. Empty nest, aging parents, or career shifts can be common midlife triggers for emotional eating.

- Ask yourself: Is my snacking actually driven by hunger? Or is it influenced by emotions, fatigue, or habit?
- Action Step: Keep a food journal to help you recognize when eating is motivated by emotions, stress, hunger, or just boredom.



10. Track Progress Beyond the Scale

Tracking your weight on the scale can be frustrating if you aren't noticing much of a change. If you're strength training, it can take even longer to show up as a loss since you may be retaining water or having inflammation. Always remember, patience is key.

- Ask yourself: Am I noticing progress in other ways, such as less bloating or better energy?
- Action Step: Track beyond the scale by noticing how you feel and how your clothes are fitting. You can also track your body measurements. The bottom line is progress will show up with consistency, so don't give up!



11. Honor Your Energy Needs

Your “energy needs” are the number of calories your body burns at rest. Those needs may decrease as your hormones fluctuate. This may be due to muscle loss and a slower metabolism. Strength training, fueling your body with the right foods, and managing your stress can combat these issues.

Determine your energy needs by using a calorie calculator. This number will be based on your weight, height, activity level, and age. This is meant to give you a better perspective of how to eat to maintain your current body weight. Use this information as a guide to help you figure out how many calories to add or subtract for fat loss. (Remember, if you eat too few calories, it can slow your metabolism, so aim for no more than a 500-calorie deficit.)

- Ask yourself: Are my energy needs matching the ways in which I’m fueling my body?
- Action Step: Use our [Calorie Calculator](#) to find your energy needs. Track your food for one to two weeks to see if you are on the right path. Don’t obsess over calories; simply become more aware of them. (Try the free version of the [Cronometer](#) app to track food.)



5. *Hormone-Friendly Meal Ideas & Supplements*



By now, you've learned all about the benefits of a hormone-friendly, plant-based diet for perimenopause and menopause. The next step is to put what you've learned into action. On the following pages, you'll get examples of hormone-balancing meal ideas for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks & sweets. You'll also learn about the best supplements to support you and your hormones for health and longevity.

To find printable versions of these recipes, menopause information, tips, and more, visit us at [Balanced by Plants](#).



HORMONE-FRIENDLY *breakfast ideas*



Protein Oatmeal
with almond milk,
vegan protein
powder, bananas,
and cinnamon



Tofu scramble
with spinach,
bell peppers,
and turmeric



Chia pudding
topped with
walnuts, berries,
and peanut
butter



Smoothie with
frozen banana,
berries, flaxseed,
and vegan protein
powder



HORMONE-FRIENDLY *lunch ideas*



**Quinoa and
Edamame Power
Bowl** with tamari
sesame dressing



**Vegan Pesto Sub
Sandwich** with
crispy tofu



**Chickpea Salad
Sandwich** on
whole grain or
sourdough bread



**Vegetarian Taco
Cups** with pinto
beans and fresh
pico de gallo



HORMONE-FRIENDLY *dinner ideas*



**Hormone Friendly
Tortilla Soup** with
black beans and
fire roasted
tomatoes



**Miso-Glazed
Tofu with Bok
Choy and Rice**



**Tahini Thai
Noodles** with
garlic & ginger



**Chickpea &
Sweet Potato
Coconut
Curry**



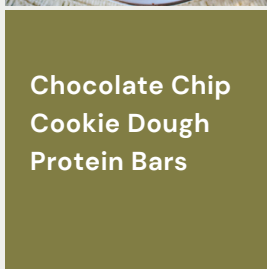
HORMONE-FRIENDLY *snacks & sweets*



Warm Cinnamon Apples topped with a scoop of vegan vanilla ice cream



Tahini Brownie Bites with chopped walnuts



Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Protein Bars



Homemade Hummus with veggies and whole wheat pita



Hormone-Friendly Supplements

Although a plant-based diet provides you with the vast majority of your dietary needs, a few vitamins may need to be supplemented, particularly vitamin B12. This B vitamin is only found in animal products or fortified plant-based food. It's important to supplement a plant-based diet with vitamin B12 to avoid a vitamin deficiency. Here is a list of hormone-friendly supplements to consider:

- **Vitamin B12:** Vital for nervous system function and red blood cell formation; must supplement if on a plant-based diet

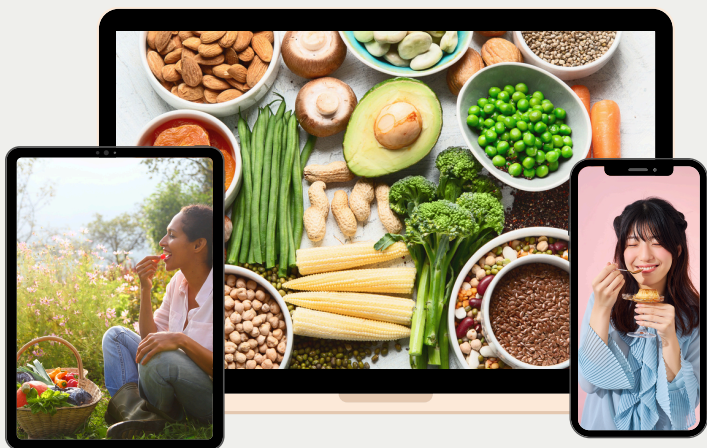


- **Vitamin D3 and K:** Supports immune health, aids in calcium absorption and bone health; common for women to be deficient
- **Calcium:** Important for bone density; contained in many plant foods, but may be supplemented if needed

Hormone-Friendly Supplements

- **Magnesium:** Supports bone health, stress management, and may help you sleep better
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids (algae-based):** Beneficial for the health of your brain, eyes, cardiovascular system, and skin
- **Iodine:** Key for proper thyroid function; may need to supplement if not using iodized salt

Health Disclaimer: Always consult with a healthcare provider or dietitian before starting supplements, especially during menopause, as individual needs vary based on health status, diet, and lifestyle.



FREE 3-DAY MENOPAUSE

Meal Plan with Recipes

Ready to feel more energized, balanced, and supported through menopause? If you've been searching for a simple way to nourish your body, manage symptoms, and support your hormones naturally, our 3-day plant-based meal plan is a wonderful place to start.

It was designed with your needs in mind, with satisfying recipes that are rich in fiber, antioxidants, and essential nutrients. Let's take the first step together! Sign up now to get your free copy!

[**SIGNUP NOW**](#)

References

Harvard Health. "Menopause and Perimenopause". [\[Link\]](#)

Mayo Clinic. "The Reality of Menopause Weight Gain" [\[Link\]](#)

Orlando Health. "How Too Much Stress Can Cause Weight Gain" [\[Link\]](#)

The Menopause Society. "Hot Flashes May Be Less Bothersome for Vegans" [\[Link\]](#)

University Hospitals. "Does Menopause Change the Way You Metabolize Alcohol?" [\[Link\]](#)

Cleveland Clinic. "Why Do Some People Gain Weight After Starting a Workout Program?" [\[Link\]](#)

Nutrition Facts. "Supplements" [\[Link\]](#)

Nutrition Facts. "Optimum Nutrient Recommendations" [\[Link\]](#).