

Bloating & the Menopause

Do you find your stomach inflates in size over the course of a day? Experience water retention?

Bloating is a common symptom of the perimenopause and the menopause, with many women finding that they experience abdominal issues, bowel issues and increased flatulence. These IBS type symptoms and feelings of tightness in the abdomen can last from a few hours to a few days and this varies person to person. Examples of symptoms experienced include: stomach pain, bloating, trapped wind, diarrhoea and constipation.

The reason this is experienced is due to the fluctuation in hormone levels. Oestrogen levels become higher in relation to progesterone which acts as a diuretic helping to keep you in balance however when levels of this hormone drop, this can cause you to hold onto fluid, making you feel bloated. Your digestion can become sluggish, you might notice that you may become constipated. There often is also a change the amount of bile produced, affecting how the body digests fats, causing flatulence in the digestive system. One hormone has a direct impact on another, so achieving balance will help.

These are not the only factors that contribute towards bloating, for instance stress, poor dietary habits, alcohol and caffeine aggravate your digestive system.

Often during the menopause weight is gained leading to many women going on crash diets. These crash diets can also cause bloating due to a rapid decrease in calorie consumption. It would be more advisable to eat small regular meals so your system will be able to digest the food more easily.

Exercise is proven to have a positive effect in aiding digestion so I would also advise regular exercise to help this issue. This however is sometimes easier said than done as women often find during the menopause activity levels decrease due to lack of motivation and exhaustion.

What I would recommend is that if bloating persists for more than two weeks you should visit the doctor to eliminate any underlying health issues. Treatments often recommended vary from HRT, activity levels as well as nutrition. Therapy is another approach when dealing with stress, emotion, anxiety and depression.