

## Microbiome and the Menopause

As your hormones change during the peri menopause and menopause, you may experience a series of digestive health changes, including wind,, bloating, and changes in your bowel movements.

Changes in your body's hormones including oestrogen, cortisol and insulin are common during menopause, as well as weight gain, especially around your midsection. Oestrogen and the microbiome regulate weight gain and lipid deposition independently of each other.

The gut connects your mental and physical well-being, helping to control; body weight, metabolism, mental health, appetite, and digestion. It is therefore important to have a diverse microbial community working together to keep you healthy, one type of bacteria being dominant is often what leads to you becoming sick. Disruption can be caused by stress, lack of sleep, lack of exercise, and an unbalanced diet, leading to GI issues.

Menopause has been shown to alter the gut microbiome, a few studies have suggested that microbiome changes post ovariectomy are associated with increased adiposity, decreased metabolic rate, and insulin resistance, changes attenuated by oestrogen administration.

The micro-organisms that we host in our gastrointestinal tract maintain our gut health, break down complex carbohydrates to improve energy extraction from food, produce vitamins and minerals, aid in digestion and absorption, ferment dietary fibres and protect us against pathogens. Maintaining a healthy microbiome is also crucial for chronic disease prevention and healthy ageing.

Changing what you eat can have a positive effect on your microbiome. Try focussing on superfoods that promote gut health, by incorporating fermented foods like sauerkraut, kombucha, and kefir. These have live probiotic strains that can replenish beneficial bacteria fast. These foods help you digest foods properly making the nutrients more available for absorption.

Studies have also indicated that probiotics can alleviate menopausal symptoms and improve the quality of life of perimenopausal/postmenopausal women. Probiotics have been known to balance your gut flora, luckily there are plenty of foods that you can buy that help balance this. These foods include; yoghurt, fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, kombucha. Fruits such as bananas are easy to digest, delicious, and high in pectin, potassium, magnesium, and many other nutrients that help settle an upset stomach. Greens that are high in magnesium such as avocados, spinach, kale, nuts and seeds, are highly recommended as they help cut down the hydrochloric acid in your stomach.

Another option is herbs. They serve as a natural alternative to medicine if you want to try natural treatments to reduce your symptoms. It is suggested that herbal supplements such as peppermint oil, chamomile, liquorice root, caraway, and lemon balm can be an effective solution. Please note: DO NOT take more than recommended! Without a doubt, the one I would most highly recommend is ginger as this has been used to help settle upset stomachs for centuries! You can add a little bit of this root to your daily smoothie or make it into a cup of tea with lemon and honey.

When it comes to bread I would try to stick to sourdough as aside from being fermented, and much easier to digest, sourdough is also a great substitute if you're trying to avoid gluten (it is not gluten-free, but it has a much lower gluten content than regular wheat bread).

Alternatively, you can try cutting out common food intolerances such as gluten, dairy, caffeine and/or foods that are very acidic, spicy, or greasy, and reintroducing them one at a time, once symptoms subside, to figure out which one may be causing you inflammatory issues.

If your issues still persist please contact your GP for advice as there may be other issues that you are unaware of so always worth getting them checked out!