

Microbiome and the Menopause

As your hormones shift during menopause, you may endure a series of digestive health changes, including gas, bloating, and shifts in your bowel movements. These can be further complicated by the use of hormone replacement therapy.

Changes in your body's hormones and rapidly shifting moods 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.

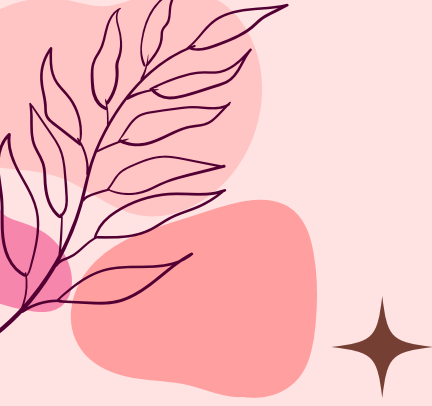
Menopause has been shown to alter the gut microbiome, a few studies have suggested that microbiome changes post ovariectomy are associated with increased adiposity, decreased metabolic rate, and insulin resistance, changes attenuated by oestrogen administration.

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.



You can make some changes to help improve your microbiome such as:

Drinking plenty of water

Prioritising your vegetables, fruit, nuts, beans, and whole-grains

Decreasing your sugar, sweetener, and processed food intake

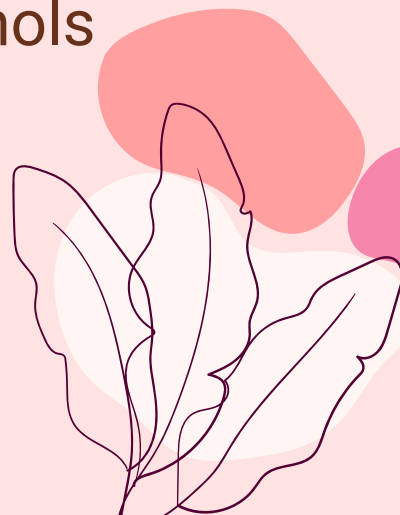
Taking quality prebiotics and probiotic

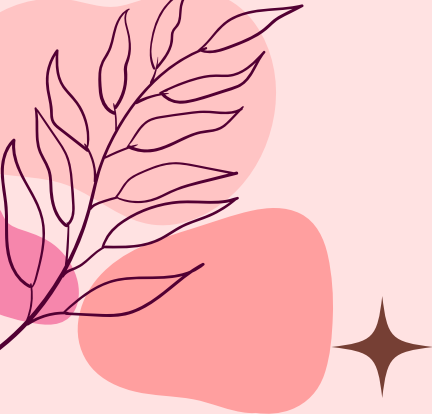
Avoid antibiotics

Add fermented foods into your diet that contain beneficial bacteria

Eat more dark chocolate and foods with polyphenols

Decrease your red meat consumption





Eating small frequent meals is often recommended to avoid overwhelming your GI tract.

Making changes is all well and good, however, I would always recommend getting your microbiome levels checked first as it is not a one size fits all formula. You can have these tests conducted by your doctor or you can opt to use a home testing kit.

It is important to be aware that it can take up to 6 months if the correct healthy habits are adopted for a change to be apparent.

This is more of a lifelong investment because you need to continue these habits to maintain a healthy microbiome.

