

helps create a calorie deficit. Opt for minimally-processed foods as they tend to be more satiating, reducing post-meal hunger and curbs snacking. Remember, you can still enjoy processed foods in moderation. Be generous to yourself and start with an 80/20 split and adjust as needed.

### Bone health

The decline of oestrogen during menopause poses a risk to bone health, increasing the chances of osteoporosis. Strengthening exercises, such as walking, jogging and weight training can play a pivotal role in increasing bone strength, which minimises the risk of injury in the future. Walking is a relatively low impact option compared to running; in fact, a large proportion of the calories you burn over the whole day can come from activities like walking. Trying to be as active as possible, by using the stairs rather than lifts, or park slightly further away from the shops, will all contribute to the calorie burn needed to lose weight and maintain good bone health.

### Hot flush relief

The dreaded hot flushes and night sweats that accompany menopause can disrupt sleep and daily activities. Engaging in regular physical activity can alleviate the frequency and intensity of these symptoms. By incorporating different types of exercise into your routine, you'll experience better sleep, enhanced comfort and a newfound sense of control over your body.

### Hormone balancing

Exercise plays a crucial role in hormone regulation, including cortisol (the stress hormone) and endorphins. By reducing cortisol levels and increasing endorphins, exercise can help to restore hormonal balance during menopause. This balance minimises symptoms like mood swings and fatigue, allowing women to feel more centred and in control.



### Powerful pelvic floor

Menopause may often bring about changes when it comes to the pelvic floor, including incontinence or discomfort, so it's important to increase your pelvic floor muscles if you can. To help strengthen them try to incorporate Kegel exercises throughout your daily routine, even while you're exercising, especially in yoga or Pilates sessions. The best position to start in is lying down or sitting. Begin by contracting your pelvic floor muscles and holding it for a few seconds. It's important to avoid holding your breath or tensing other muscles during the exercise – focus solely on your pelvic floor. As you become more comfortable with the exercise, gradually increase the duration of each contraction. 🧘

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## 4 self-help practices

We can help ourselves through the menopause journey with these simple and natural yet powerful practices. By Sally Parkes

### Create space

Create physical and mental space to allow the transformational transition to occur. Clearing one's living space of belongings that are no longer of use, for example, can be wonderfully cathartic. Furthermore, the processing of information can become more challenging in menopause, so allowing for more time around social, family and work appointments can be helpful to avoid overwhelm.

### Apply boundaries

Putting boundaries such as simply saying 'no' to certain requests when it has been the norm to say 'yes' to keep the peace, can feel very uncomfortable initially. Keep in mind, however, that boundaries help us to avoid the infamous 'burn out'. That's because maintaining boundaries helps to lower stress levels (Ahimsa to oneself), so we can have peace of mind that healthy boundaries are necessary for everyone involved.

### Get rest

Sleep can become problematic for many women at this time so developing a practice of Yoga Nidra and Restorative Yoga can be wonderfully nourishing. Regular breaks from screens and people in general can also be very helpful, as can less caffeine and alcohol consumption. Collectively, these tactics help us to manage over-stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system, making the process of accessing deep sleep more doable.

### Nutritional intake

Menopausal symptoms such as changes in mood, energy and blood sugar levels, slower digestion, heavy periods, joint inflammation, and a longer recovery period from exercise, are all indicators that we need to take extra care to meet nutritional needs. A more alkaline diet can be very effective in managing these challenges with legumes, sprouted beans, fermented tofu, oily fish, nuts and seeds and leafy green vegetables all helping to address acidity. Fruits such as melon, cherries, plums and nectarines, and grains such as spelt, quinoa and buckwheat are also alkaline foods. Include lots of water and herbal teas to help flush out acidity for the best results.

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