

Exercise Your Way through Perimenopause

By Susan Megge

It's unfortunate, but most women don't realize how crucial a role regular fitness and exercise is to reducing many symptoms associated with perimenopause. As women approach menopause they begin to gain weight, especially around their mid-section. This abdominal weight is quite common and the result of declining hormone levels, which may cause the metabolism to slow down significantly.

Most women will notice a significant amount of fat deposition around the area of their mid-section or abdomen. You'll especially want to avoid or eliminate this added weight due to the fact that this type of fat plays a significant role in contributing to heart disease, the number one killer of middle-aged and older women. You may not think that losing your added weight is possible, but it is; this weight gain can be eliminated quite easily by simply getting into a regular exercise routine. Fitness and regular activity are the keys to decreasing weight and avoiding many conditions associated with aging. If you're willing to commit to a regular exercise routine – one that includes weight bearing exercises – you will change the muscle-to-fat ratio, enabling you to increase your metabolic rate and burn calories, even at rest.

In addition to weight gain, if you're in your thirties or beyond, you're also beginning to lose bone mass at a rate of approximately 1% per year. This rate will increase to 2%-3% per year after menopause. Many studies have proven that exercise can increase a woman's bone density, which reduces the risk of osteoporosis and the incidence of falls and bone fractures associated with osteoporosis. As you may know, osteoporosis goes undetected in many women until bone fractures occur; if, however, you take preventative measures, such as getting into a regular fitness routine, you can indeed reduce this risk.

Exercising regularly can also be beneficial in reducing the occurrence of hot flashes, a common symptom women experience as they approach menopause. Hot flashes have been known to contribute to impaired sleep patterns and a decreased energy level. If you're not getting enough sleep and are feeling sluggish, it's quite likely that this may affect your overall mood, which has the potential to negatively impact both personal and professional relationships. Estrogen replacement therapy has been shown to decrease these symptoms, but many women prefer to seek natural alternatives; obviously, exercise has proven to be a very viable alternative for a great number of women.

In summary, making fitness and exercise a priority will benefit most women who are experiencing symptoms of perimenopause, and the positive results – both physical and emotional – are well worth the extra time you'll spend once you begin and continue a regular exercise routine. I know it's easier to make excuses to not exercise, but you love your family and yourself; therefore, take just a little extra time to ensure that you feel good, look good and have loads of energy to participate in all of life's offerings.