



## Menopause weight gain: Stop the middle age spread

As you get older, you might notice that maintaining your usual weight becomes more difficult. In fact, many women gain weight around the menopause transition. Menopause weight gain isn't inevitable, however. You can reverse course by paying attention to healthy-eating habits and leading an active lifestyle.

### What causes menopause weight gain?

The hormonal changes of menopause might make you more likely to gain weight around your abdomen than around your hips and thighs. But, hormonal changes alone don't necessarily cause menopause weight gain. Instead, the weight gain is usually related to aging, as well as lifestyle and genetic factors. For example, muscle mass typically diminishes with age, while fat increases. Loss of muscle mass decreases the rate at which your body uses calories, which can make it more challenging to maintain a healthy weight. If you continue to eat as you always have and don't increase your physical activity, you're likely to gain weight.

Genetic factors also might play a role in menopause weight gain. If your parents or other close relatives carry extra weight around the abdomen, you're likely to do the same.

Other factors, such as a lack of exercise, unhealthy eating and not enough sleep, might contribute to menopause weight gain. When people don't get enough sleep, they tend to snack more and consume more calories.

### What's the best way to prevent weight gain after menopause?

There's no magic formula for preventing — or reversing — menopause weight gain. Simply stick to weight-control basics:

- Move more.** Aerobic activity can help you shed excess pounds and maintain a healthy weight. Strength training counts, too. As you gain muscle, your body burns calories more efficiently — which makes it easier to control your weight. For most healthy adults, experts recommend moderate aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, for at least 150 minutes a week or vigorous aerobic activity, such as jogging, for at least 75 minutes a week. In addition, strength training exercises are recommended at least twice a week. If you want to lose weight or meet specific fitness goals, you might need to exercise more.

- Eat less.** To maintain your current weight — let alone lose excess pounds — you might need about 200 fewer calories a day during your 50s than you did during your 30s and 40s. To reduce calories without skimping on nutrition, pay attention to what you're eating and drinking. Choose more fruits, vegetables and whole grains, particularly those that are less processed and contain more fiber. Legumes, nuts, soy, meat, fish or chicken are healthy protein options. Replace butter, stick margarine and shortening with oils, such as olive or vegetable oil.

- Check your sweet habit.** Added sugars account for nearly 300 calories a day in the average American diet. Foods that contribute to excess dietary sugar include sugar sweetened drinks, cookies, pies, cakes, doughnuts, ice cream and candy.

- Limit alcohol.** Alcoholic beverages add excess calories to your diet and increase the risk of gaining weight.

- Seek support.** Surround yourself with friends and loved ones who support your efforts to eat a healthy diet and increase your physical activity. Better yet, team up and make the lifestyle changes together.

Remember, successful weight loss at any stage of life requires permanent changes in diet and exercise habits. Commit to lifestyle changes and enjoy a healthier you.

Source: Mayo Clinic Staff [http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/womens-health/in-depth/menopause-weight-gain/art-20046058/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=housecall&pg=1](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/womens-health/in-depth/menopause-weight-gain/art-20046058/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=housecall&pg=1)

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