

10 TOP TIPS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT ...ON A



By Cath Short, Personal Trainer & Nutrition Coach

Hot flushes, night sweats, anxiety, stubborn hormonal weight gain... any of this sound familiar?

We know that all of the above, and more, can be expected at some point during our menopausal rollercoaster ride, but what we're often NOT told is that there are certain dietary changes that we can make to reduce these symptoms.

In September 2020, a randomised control trial was headed by Neal D. Barnard MD, FACC, and his team to study the effects of a whole-food plant-based diet on menopausal symptoms and body weight for postmenopausal women. Here is the summary:

"In an initial cohort of a controlled trial of a plant-based diet including soybeans, moderate-to-severe postmenopausal hot flushes fell by 84% in 12 weeks. For 59% of participants, moderate-to-severe hot flushes ended altogether. There were also improvements in body weight and in psychosocial, physical, and sexual domains."

In fact, over 12 weeks, the control group lost an average of 0.24kg whilst the intervention group lost an average of 3.6kg.

I have worked with many female clients over the years and it's those who commit to transitioning to a more plant-based eating 'lifestyle' instead of a 'quick-fix-diet' approach that gets the long-term health gains.

I would like to share with you my top 10 tips that can limit or even prevent hormonal weight gain and help reduce menopausal symptoms:

1 **Drink a large glass of water first thing in the morning** to assist with hydration and toxin elimination. We naturally detox during quality sleep and so first thing in the morning it is a good time to assist the flush and rehydrate before we take in food.

Plain water is best as lemon and water can be damaging for your teeth.

2 **Drink (decaf) black coffee or tea** whilst you are still fasting (at least 30 minutes after your morning water and before breakfast). This practice helps to boost your metabolism and rev up your fat burners. The important thing to remember is to not add milk or sugar as the goal is to increase your fasting hours!

3 **Eat the rainbow.** Colourful high-fibre fruit and veg are not only filling but also great for bowel movement and gut health. If you have struggled with constipation on a standard Western diet then the chances are you will soon be relieved of the burden when you reduce your meat, dairy and egg intake. Animal-based products are completely devoid of fibre and can take 2 days to digest fully.

4 **Limit oils, butter and spreads** as much as possible. These foods are highly calorific and encourage weight gain. We can get all the healthy fats we need from whole grains, soya products, avocados, nuts, seeds and even fruit and veg! Use cold-pressed olive oil sparingly. Cheese is also dense in saturated fat and cholesterol and can be highly addictive due to its high fat and salt content.

5 **Eat fermented foods.** Foods such as raw sauerkraut, kimchi, organic apple cider vinegar, live yoghurt and tempeh (fermented soy) all help to improve digestion by boosting the healthy gut bacteria. Good gut health can also improve your immune system and brain function!

6 **Chew your food.** Research shows that people who eat more slowly and chew their food properly are less likely to be overweight. Rushing your meals can lead to overeating before your body recognises it is full, as well as poor digestion. Slow down and chew!

7 **Reduce sugar intake.** Refined sugar provides empty calories (i.e. no worthy nutritional content). It is also highly inflammatory and feeds bad bacteria in the gut which can inhibit weight loss and weaken your immune system. Fruit, vegetables, legumes and wholegrains will provide your body with all the carbohydrates it needs for optimum health.

8 **Drink lots of water!** Aim for 2-3 litres of water a day. We can often feel hungry when in reality our body just needs water. Also, drinking a large glass of water ½ an hour before meals can prevent us from over-eating. Replace your evening glass of wine with a soothing and hydrating cup of herbal tea.

9 **Eat protein-rich plant foods.** Animal-based foods contain high levels of saturated fats and cholesterol. Replace animal protein with lentils, chickpeas, beans (including edamame), tofu, tempeh, hemp and chia seeds, quinoa and nuts, which are synonymous with better health.

10 **Eat only fresh fruit and salad for 1 day a month.** Eating calorie-light foods for a day is a brilliant semi-detox and weight-loss tool. Make a big fresh fruit salad to eat throughout the day and then a light green salad for your evening meal... and watch the pounds fall off!

Remember, it all comes down to mindset. Only you have the power to create a happy, healthy body by taking on empowering daily lifestyle habits to reset your metabolism and allow your body to heal. Whilst you can achieve weight loss on any nutrition programme by restricting your caloric intake, a healthy whole-food plant-based diet supersedes any other when it comes to easing menopausal symptoms, achieving sustained weight control and longevity. Eat to live, don't live to eat!