



ELITE
PERSONAL TRAINING & FITNESS SOLUTIONS

HEALTH TOPIC OF THE WEEK

12/25 - How Does Exercise Help Menopause?

Introduction

The benefits of exercise are endless. EPT has covered dozens of them since launching our health topic series in 2021. This week our focus is menopause – an area that rarely gets enough coverage when it comes to the exercise connection. Men – This article is for you, too. Chances are you have a girlfriend, spouse or family member who may be suffering needlessly when there is something that can improve their symptoms.



Exercise benefits menopause by reducing symptoms such as hot flashes and sleep disorders. It also improves bone mineral density and muscle mass. Understanding what to expect may help dispel the stigma that is often associated with this condition. Last, but not least, exercise can improve the psychosocial influence menopause has on quality of life.

**Ease Menopause
Symptoms with
Exercise.**

What is menopause?

Menopause is a natural condition that occurs in half the human population - women between the ages of 40-58. The three phases include perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause. Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause. It may last 4 to 8 years. In this phase, estrogen and progesterone hormones start to decline and periods become irregular. When hormone production declines, so does fertility. Menopause is diagnosed after 12 consecutive months of amenorrhea (not having a period) have occurred. Post-menopause is the final phase of menopause.

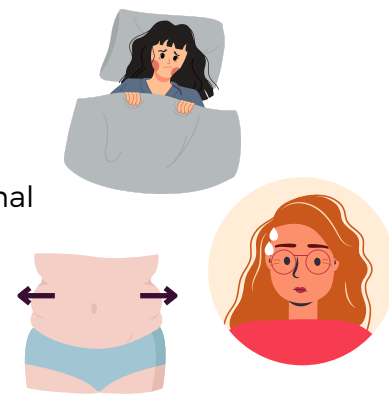


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Vasomotor Symptoms (VMS)

Vasomotor symptoms are those that occur due to fluctuating hormone levels and the constriction or dilation of blood vessels. Symptoms range in severity and frequency. They include hot flashes, night sweats, heart palpitations, vaginal dryness, insomnia, trouble focusing, mood swings, decreased libido, urinary issues, and changes in blood pressure. Hormone fluctuations can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and stroke.



Hot flashes and changes to body composition are commonly reported by frustrated women who are beginning to start menopause. Hormonal fluctuations negatively impact body composition because fat distribution shifts from other areas to the midsection.

At EPT, we emphasize the dangers of visceral adipose tissue (VAT), more commonly known as belly fat. An increase in belly fat and a decline of lean muscle mass puts women at greater risk for developing long-term chronic diseases. Spoiler alert: you can avoid this scenario by continuing your training here with us and by enrolling in nutrition counseling to further improve your progress!

**So far, this sounds like a lot of bad news, but it doesn't have to be.
Let exercise come to the rescue!
How does exercise help with menopause?**



Exercise helps reduce VAT.

This is true for everyone, not just women in menopause. Belly fat is dangerous. It is metabolically active and wants to promote and protect itself by causing insulin resistance, increased hunger, widespread inflammation and fat deposition from the liver. These conditions undermine your current and future health and increase the risk of many chronic diseases. Prevent this from occurring by exercising with EPT! We are experts who will prescribe, monitor, progress and regularly re-evaluate your training. Exercise is highly recommended for women who are just beginning menopause. If this describes you, start exercising now to reduce fat mass and increase lean muscle mass. Read on later to find out which type of exercise is best for menopause.

Exercise improves bone mineral density and balance.

Falls are the leading cause of trips to the ER for adults over 65, and 1 out of 4 women who fall and break a hip will die within a year! That is scary. Exercise not only strengthens your muscles but also your bones. Estrogen slows the natural breakdown of bones and prevents them from getting weaker. During menopause, estrogen levels fluctuate and then drop. This reduction significantly speeds up the process of bone loss, which often results in osteoporosis. Exercise can reverse postmenopausal bone loss and reduce the risk of injury from falling. A meta-analysis showed that weight-bearing exercises reduce the incidence of hip fracture by about 50%! Improved bone density = greater bone strength = better balance = less falls.



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Exercise improves vasomotor symptoms.

A common goal for health is to improve quality of life. Who doesn't want to live longer and better? Unfortunately, symptoms of menopause can negatively impact a woman's quality of life for several years. Regular exercise can improve vasomotor symptoms such as hot flashes and can also help with sleep disorders and some psychological problems. Hot flashes (also called flushes) are defined as a sudden flare of heat and sweating. One study showed that women who participated in even moderate aerobic exercise improved control of their thermo-regulatory system by reducing their basal core temperature. This improves heat dissipation because sweat rate and skin blood flow thresholds can occur at a lower temperature. These women reported they experienced a 60% reduction in the frequency of hot flashes. That's some substantial relief.



Exercise builds confidence and self-esteem.

There is no universal experience when it comes to menopause. Having negative expectations and feeling unprepared makes for a bad experience. However, understanding the normal changes of menopause and how to manage them builds confidence and self-esteem. Having the right resources and support can make all the difference. Exercise also releases your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, reduces stress, and improves your mood. Along with feeling good, exercise helps with weight management, improving overall body composition and appearance, all of which boost confidence.

What kind of exercise is best?

Choosing the right exercises can be confusing, which is why the trainers at EPT do all the work for you. Let us train you safely and effectively. Resistance training yields the most benefit to bone gain and osteoporosis prevention. A recent survey in the U.S. showed that after the age of 74, 66% of women cannot lift objects weighing more than 4.5 kg. Bones have a primary function of load bearing. Resistance training improves bone density, resulting in an increase in overall strength and functional load capability.

According to a study reported in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, participating in resistance training three times a week for five months produced a 3.8% increase in bone mineral content.

All the female clients at EPT are ahead of the game. They are training to avoid the cascade of events that could happen in the future. Most of our clients are 45 and up, and the women have made huge accomplishments: 3-minute 25 lbs. plank, 4 and a half minute 45 lbs. plank, 3-minute 70 lbs. plank, 7-minute wall sit, 15-minute Romberg drill, and 300 lbs. sled push.



Resistance training is great, but don't stop there. Other forms of exercise are also helpful to maintain or improve endurance, aerobic power, motor performance, grip strength, flexibility, reaction time, and balance. EPT can guide you through it all.



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Conclusion

Making exercise a part of a sustainable lifestyle will improve activities of daily living and quality of life during menopause. There is no reason for stigma. Menopausal women who are knowledgeable, prepared, training regularly, and managing their nutrition can control their experience. Proper exercise is complex. It should be overseen by a professional. Keep in mind that EPT can also advise on supplements that may help alleviate symptoms of menopause.



Pass this article on to family and friends who are in any phase of menopause, and please reach out if you have any questions.



This article was contributed by Amy Kha BS, NASM-CPT, Pn1, CFNP. For her bio, please see [Amy Kha BS, NASM-CPT, Pn1, CFNP | Elite Fitness \(eliteptf.com\)](#).

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