Menopause and Bloating

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Digestive Problems During Menopause

If you're a woman aged 45 to 55 and you've recently started to have digestive problems, these problems could be the result of menopause. Declining estrogen levels during menopause can cause cortisol, the 'stress hormone', to interfere with proper digestion. When estrogen levels drop, the cortisol produced with stress has more of an effect on the digestive system and can result in cramps, diarrhea, bloating, gas, constipation, and heartburn. So, what can you do to improve your digestive health during menopause?

Menopause and Constipation

Does menopause cause constipation? Well, hormonal changes experienced during menopause can cause constipation, among other digestive concerns.

One study of post-menopausal women showed that 37 percent of them experienced constipation, and over half of those women had less than three bowel movements per week. On top of your other menopause symptoms, this can be the last thing a menopausal woman wants to deal with.

The reason for menopause constipation lies in the digestive tract. When women begin transitioning into menopause their digestive track slows down and may not absorb nutrients efficiently — this results in menopause bloating and constipation.

Constipation in menopause can be incredibly uncomfortable, so ensure you:

- Drink plenty of water
- Reduce stress wherever possible
- Quit smoking
- Exercise regularly
- Follow a healthy, fiber-rich diet

Increase Fiber Intake

The American Dietetic Association recommends 25 grams of fiber each day for optimal digestive functioning. Foods high in fiber help to clean and maintain a healthy digestive tract, controlling constipation as well as diarrhea. Whole grains, like wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal and brown rice, are a good source of and should be added to your diet.

Avoid Fatty Foods

High fat content in foods can lead to heartburn and could cause diarrhea. Avoid fast food, as many fast food products have lots of hidden fat, and embrace fresh fruits and vegetables. Alcohol consumption can slow down

the digestive system so alcohol should be avoided or limited.

Up Your Fluid Intake

You'll need to take it easy on the alcohol, but go for it with other fluids. Though water should make up the majority of your fluid intake, low-sugar juices, herbal teas, soup and broth are other options to consider. Fluids help break down foods through the digestive process, and water helps neutralize stomach acid which helps to stave off heartburn. And certain teas, like ginger and peppermint, are great for soothing your stomach and digestive tract, aiding in proper digestion.

Get Enough Sleep

Sleep is important because it activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which as well as being in charge of how your body rests, controls how you digest food. It is said that getting at least seven hours of sleep per night can help fight heartburn, and lying on your left side when sleeping promotes better digestion.

Exercise Daily

Brisk walking, swimming, and other aerobic types of exercise help to move things along in your digestive tract. Exercise helps constipation as well as trapped gas. Thirty minutes of exercise each day is optimal, but even a few minutes is better than nothing at all.

Menopause and bloating, heartburn and cramps don't have to go hand in hand. Try these methods and see how they improve your digestive health.