
BEAT THE BELLY BULGE & BRAIN FOG

A GUIDE FOR WOMEN IN THE MENOPAUSE WINDOW

Menopause Is Real

This helpful piece isn't about educating you on menopause. There is plenty of education out there on menopause for those seeking it. It is about helping you navigate the terrain on your new adventure. Maybe perimenopause crept up on you like it did me. Maybe you saw it coming but felt powerless to do anything about it.

For many of us, the first signs might be the typical hot flash but we might not connect our growing waistline with menopause. Many women deal with excess and seemingly sudden weight gain around the middle. For me personally, it didn't help that Covid-19 came along when I was 44 and in the three years that followed I deposited a solid thirty pounds of weight to my frame.

I went from a reasonably healthy BMI to borderline level 1 obesity. It was the other signs that got me moving. These included high blood pressure, poor cardiovascular endurance, low energy, mild depression (or is binge-watching all the seasons of Walking Dead alone...twice... normal?) and just not feeling right in my body. I was in denial about connecting my symptoms to perimenopause. I didn't feel 'old enough', but my body was telling a different story.

How I Turned Things Around

It was two-fold. I hit the weights and changed my nutrition. This handy piece is about getting stronger as it has many health benefits like minimizing bone loss and building stronger bones and joints. It can also boost endorphins, decrease cortisol levels (which helps with belly fat) and minimize other menopause symptoms.

It's Okay to Lift Heavy

Regular physical activity, particularly weight-bearing exercises like strength training can help reduce the effects of the menopause. Studies by the American College of Sports

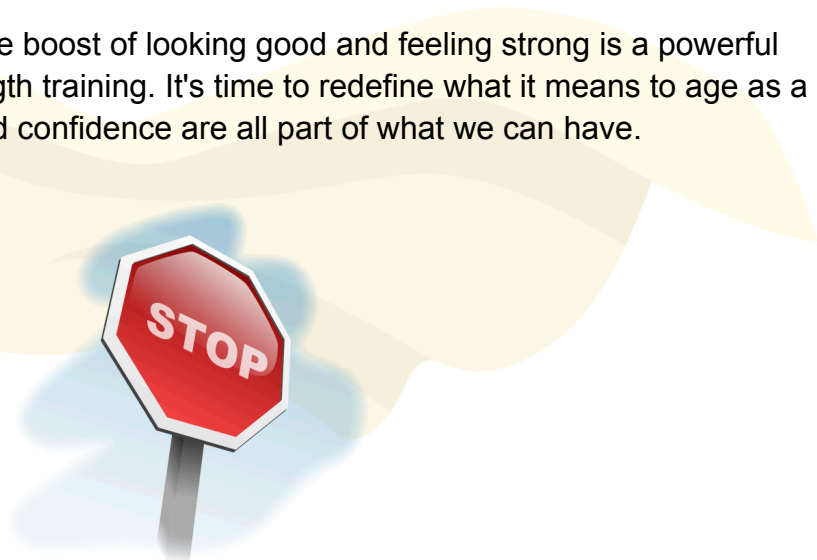
That Shero Life

Medicine show it helps maintain bone density, improve cardiovascular health, and boost mood. And, a 2019 study published in the journal *Menopause* found that strength training helped maintain bone density in postmenopausal women.

This is especially important because menopause can lead to a decrease in estrogen, which can accelerate bone loss. Strength training helps counteract this by stimulating the bones and muscles, leading to a stronger and healthier physique.

Women are often loath to lift heavy. Our society has gotten used to seeing women age with little grace, demeaning silver hairs and strength. But those things can be a beautiful part of this phase of our lives. Physical strength will help you have a better quality of life and keep doing the things that bring you joy, whether it's gardening, traveling, or playing with grandchildren.

Not to mention, the confidence boost of looking good and feeling strong is a powerful reward that comes with strength training. It's time to redefine what it means to age as a woman – strength, power, and confidence are all part of what we can have.



BEFORE YOU CONTINUE

Before doing the exercises I provide below, **please do a personal fitness assessment and talk to your physician** to ensure you're physically able to do these moves. Otherwise, modify what resistance training you do. *Again, please check with your physician before beginning an exercise routine.*

BURN FAT AND BUILD MUSCLE

High Intensity Interval Training using Sprint Interval Training

To get the most out of your training, add cardio into the mix. I enjoy the version of HIIT that I use that incorporates quick bursts of cardio followed by medium to low intensity resistance moves.

A Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise article from 2019 showed that women 47-59 who did a 20 minute SIT session gained muscle, lost fat, and improved their aerobic fitness over 8 weeks. Another 16 week study with postmenopausal women doing SIT training or regular moderate intensity cardio for 40 minutes showed they both gained muscle and lost fat but only the women doing SIT also lost belly fat.

You'll use a 30/30 Method or 20/20 (if 30/30 is too challenging). Your goal is to do a minimum of a 2 minute round and eventually work up to longer rounds. The entire HIIT session should be a minimum of 15 minutes up to 26 minutes.

These moves may also incorporate compound movements or be simpler. They are certainly not the only moves you can choose for your exercises. Pick a move that you are able to perform while keeping your form for 20 to 30 seconds. Choose 1 to 2 moves from each 30 second split shown below, per set. Try to switch up for the 2nd set to work different muscles.

Hard 30

- Elliptical
- Run on treadmill
- Run in place
- Jumping Jacks
- Box Jump (use one you can safely jump on and off of, 6"-24")
- Run up a hill (pair with walking down the hill)

Easy/Moderate 30

- Dumbbell Bicep Curl
- Dumbbell Bicep Curl to Overhead Press
- Dumbbell Squats to Overhead Press
- Dumbbell Bench Press
- Dumbbell Forward Arm Lift to Side Arm Lift
- Dumbbell One Leg Romanian Deadlift
- Walk Down Hill

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