

Eat Well

Breeze the menopause

LIFT YOUR MOOD
AND BALANCE
YOUR HORMONES
WITH SIMPLE AND
NUTRITIOUS CHOICES

While the majority of women can expect menopausal symptoms to occur between the ages of 45 and 55, the intensity and range will differ from woman to woman. Depleting levels of oestrogen can have a range of side-effects including irregular periods, hot flashes, palpitations and disturbed sleep. Nourish from within with a balanced diet containing plenty of fresh fruit and veg, fish, beans and seeds for a happy, healthy route through the menopause. Our experts explain.



NUTS & SEEDS

Getting plenty of seeds into your diet can play a key part in boosting your mood. Marilyn says: "Add phytoestrogens to your diet - these foods will help to cushion the effects of the menopausal hormone roller coaster." Foods rich in naturally-occurring phytoestrogens include flaxseeds, hemp, sesame, chia, and linseeds, all of which contain zinc, vitamin E and omega-3, which blend together to lift your mood. Nutritionist Suzi Grant advises: "Put a tablespoon of golden flaxseeds into water and soak overnight, or you can add them to a smoothie if you can add them to a smoothie if you prefer. I call this drink Nature's HRT - it's packed with natural phytoestrogens as well as omega-3."

Nuts are another great way to keep you smiling because of their

omega-3 content. Try snacking on walnuts, hazelnuts and pecans to gain that extra mood-boost.



HERBS

Certain herbs can be hugely beneficial when it comes to reducing menopausal symptoms, as Marilyn explains: "Sage has been shown to decrease hot flashes by 50 per cent after four weeks and by 64 per cent after eight weeks. It can also help to relieve irritability, anxiety and mental exhaustion which are all connected to the menopause." However, if you are on any medication then it is wise to see your doctor first before creating any herbal concoctions, as they really do pack a punch.





FISH

Omega-3 is one of the best ways to get uplifting nutrients into your diet. The fatty acids not only help you mentally, but can also help maintain a good metabolic rate, which can prevent weight gain during the menopause. DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) is the most efficient fatty acid, working to prevent low levels of serotonin, which is linked to forms of depression. This fatty acid can mainly be found in oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna, herring, anchovies and trout.



BEANS

Soya beans comprise of amino acids, isoflavones and minerals that have been proved to help with mood swings during the menopause, so much so, in fact, that women in countries that enjoy a soya bean-rich diet report less dramatic symptoms. As Suzi explains: "The soya bean is a common staple of the Japanese diet, and has such a positive impact that many women don't feel the symptoms of the menopause." Before you rush to the freezer aisle to stock up on this wonder-bean, be aware that over-doing your intake can result in problems elsewhere. She warns: "Large quantities of soya bean can disrupt the endocrine system which can lead to thyroid problems, and depletion of nutrients including zinc, iodine and calcium, among other issues." Get the right balance by limiting your intake to 7-8 grams a day, and supplementing your diet with iodine-rich vegetables – seaweed is ideal. Some of the best ways to get soya into your diet without depleting vital minerals is to eat Japanese dishes including miso, tempeh and tamari.

Other than soya, there is a whole host of legumes which contain high levels of iron, magnesium and zinc, all of which help towards boosting your mood, especially during the menopause. Some of these include chickpeas, pinto beans, kidney beans, black beans, lentils and green peas.



BERRIES

Suzi says: "Munch on a handful of goji berries during the day instead of a sugar-laden snack. Chinese people call them 'happy berries' because they help elevate your mood." This red raisin-like fruit also has a low glycemic index, so you won't get those hot sweats followed by mood swings.

Where to buy...

OptiBac Probiotics One Week Flat.
Seven sachets, £8.69; 28 sachets,
£24.99 optibacprobiotics.co.uk

OptiBac Probiotics One Week Flat is a short-term course of live cultures, including *L. acidophilus* Rosell-52, and FOS fibres. One Week Flat provides 5 billion live cultures per sachet, and is gluten free.



WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

First things first: what should be avoided to ensure that your efforts to prevent low mood aren't counteracted. Nutritionist Dr Marilyn Glenville says: "If you're suffering from increased mood swings, irritability and depression, then balancing your blood sugar is crucial. This means you should think about the quality of your food and also the timing. Try to eat little and often, with no more than three hours in-between - if you wait longer than this, your blood sugar will drop, and the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol will be released." Likewise, in order to avoid these side-effects it's best to forego the following:

- ✗ Smoking
- ✗ Alcohol and caffeine
- ✗ High GI food
- ✗ Refined sugar
- ✗ Spicy and processed food

Our Experts



Dr. Marilyn Glenville
– nutritionist and
author of *Natural
Solutions for
Menopause*



Suzi Grant –
nutritionist, blogger
(www.alternativeageing.net), and
author of
Alternative Ageing