

Healthy ageing

Healthy ageing encompasses a proactive approach to maintaining physical, psychological, social and emotional wellbeing in our later years. It is never too late for healthy lifestyle habits, and slight changes can make a big difference as we age.

Hormonal changes are a natural part of ageing, but it looks different for men and women. For women, the decline in reproductive hormones is often more pronounced, while men experience a gradual decrease in hormone levels over time.

Menopause

Menopause refers to a single day, it's the day when a woman hasn't menstruated for 12 months. The time leading up to it is called perimenopause and afterwards postmenopause. Perimenopause is marked by irregular periods (longer or shorter in duration). It typically occurs in the mid-40s; however, it may start in the late 30s. It can last between two to ten years, with an average duration of four years. The average age for menopause is 51 however the experience is different for every woman. Symptoms may be experienced postmenopause.

Symptoms are caused because the hormones (estrogen/progesterone) produced by the ovaries fluctuate significantly. As a woman's eggs deplete, ovulation and the menstrual cycle become variable until it stops completely.

Perimenopause by its very nature has hormone fluctuations which makes blood tests ineffective as a test. Doctors now prefer to review symptoms and use a checklist to determine if a woman is peri or post menopausal.

Symptoms

Symptoms are various; some are well known and some might surprise you. When talking to your doctor investigate symptoms and rule out other causes when considering treatment.

- Bone loss
- Bloating
- Brain fog/difficulty concentrating
- Breast soreness/tenderness
- Dry or itchy skin
- Dry eyes and mouth
- Fatigue
- Gastrointestinal changes
- Genitourinary symptoms (e.g. increased urination)
- Hair loss/skin/nail changes
- Headaches or migraines
- Hot flashes and/or night sweats
- Low libido
- Low muscle mass
- Mental health changes
- Mood changes/feeling teary/irritable.
- Muscle and joint aches
- Sleep disturbances
- Tinnitus/vertigo/dizziness
- Vaginal dryness
- Visceral fat gain
- Weight gain

There may also be increased risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, heart palpitations, increased blood cholesterol / atherosclerosis risk, and osteoporosis.

Although menopause is a natural biological process, the physiological effect and symptoms may seriously affect a woman's quality of life. You do not have to 'just deal' with it! There are a variety of treatments to consider including menopausal hormone therapy, non-hormonal medications, lifestyle changes and therapeutic alternatives.

For support find a GP who has an interest and speciality in menopause. If you have difficulty finding a local GP there are several telehealth providers who specialise in woman's health.

For more information visit the Menopause Alliance Australia or Australasian Menopause Society website.





Andropause

Andropause, sometimes labelled male menopause, describes the gradual decline in testosterone levels associated with ageing in men. However, the term “male menopause” can be misleading, as andropause is a more prolonged process than menopause. It is often used interchangeably with late-onset hypogonadism.

Men typically experience a decrease in testosterone of approximately 1% per year after the age of 40. Most older men, however, maintain testosterone levels within the normal range, with only 10% to 25% exhibiting levels considered low.

Low testosterone levels in older men often go unnoticed, and the most reliable method for assessing these levels is through a blood test. Many men with low testosterone may not exhibit any symptoms, however, here are some symptoms that may indicate low testosterone:

Symptoms

- Breast tenderness and swelling
- Depression or feelings of sadness
- Decreased motivation
- Decreased bone mineral density
- Erectile dysfunction
- Height loss and low-trauma fractures
- Reduced libido
- Infertility
- Low energy levels and fatigue
- Reduced muscle mass and feelings of physical weakness
- Hot flashes or sweating

There are some less known physiological risks to be aware of, including increased risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, hypertension, increased blood cholesterol, increased risk of diabetes, and decreased bone density resulting in increased risk of osteoporosis.

If you suspect that you may have low testosterone levels, discuss your symptoms, testing options, and potential treatments with a healthcare professional. They can assist you in managing this process and ensuring your health and wellbeing.

Berrylicious oats

This easy breakfast can be prepared days in advance and is full of nutrients including protein, fibre, omega-3, and calcium to support menopause and andropause symptoms.

Serves 5 | Prep time 15 mins

Ingredients

- ▶ 1.5 cups rolled oats.
- ▶ 4 tbsp chia seeds
- ▶ 1 tbsp linseed
- ▶ 1 tbsp sunflower seeds
- ▶ 2 tbsp almond slivers
- ▶ 5 tbsp frozen berries
- ▶ 5 tbsp Greek yoghurt (natural or vanilla)
- ▶ Milk of preference as required.

Method

- ▶ Get five 250 ml containers with lids.
 - ▶ Place a tablespoon of berries in each jar.
 - ▶ Mix all dry ingredients together and then divide amongst the five containers.
 - ▶ Just cover with milk.
 - ▶ Top with a tablespoon of yoghurt.
- Seal and put in the fridge. Eat the next day.



Lvl 3, 170 Railway Parade,
West Leederville WA 6007

(08) 9483 8888  lgiswa.com.au

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