

# Are You Puzzled?

## Is Menopause Weighing You Down?

WELL, Debbie's letter of last month telling of her struggle with Hashimoto's was indeed a 'doozey'. I must admit that I hadn't heard this condition mentioned for a couple of years. Conditions like Hashimoto's and PCOS, as discussed in July, should be addressed when developing an appropriate weight loss or general health program. Failing to do so can worsen the symptoms of the condition, including the individual's weight. Thanks again Debbie for sharing your experiences, we are glad that you are now doing well.

Dear Susan,

Many menopausal women experience weight gain particularly around the abdomen region. A recent study found an average weight gain of 8 kilograms was quite normal for women nearing menopause, with hormonal changes considered to be significantly responsible. Even if you are not over weight an effective health program can do wonders to combat Menopausal symptoms.

Hormonal balance refers to the way estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, insulin and other hormones entering the blood interact with each other. Hormone production continues after menopause, although menstruation ends, because a weaker form of estrogen, estrone, is produced by the adrenal glands.

Some estrogen is produced by bacteria in the intestines from foods (such as flaxseeds, beets, lentils, squash, sweet potatoes and garlic) containing isoflavones and lignans.

Fluctuations in any one of your hormone levels affect the others and corresponding body functions.

Progesterone directly affects adrenal and thyroid function, and low levels can result in a drop in blood sugar, headaches, lethargy, depression, water retention or puffiness. With aging, comes a decrease in muscle bulk and metabolism. Research supports that estrogen may influence body fat distribution. Estrogen is the female sex hormone responsible for ovulation.

Some of the factors that contribute to weight gain around the abdomen and hips during and after menopausal transition are a shift towards fat-accumulating hormones (cortisol and insulin) and away from fat mobilizing hormones (progesterone and estrogen).

Other contributing factors leading to your weight gain after menopause could be loss of muscle tissue, lowered metabolism, sedentary lifestyle, altered habits – for example more freedom to eat out.

### Some Brief Suggestions

- Increase your intake of fish and other Essential Fatty Acids as they will increase your metabolic rate and stimulate fat burning.

- Increase your intake of phytoestrogens e.g. Soya products, sprouted Soya beans, sprouted alfalfa, red clover sprouts, lentils, kidney beans, split peas and green beans.

- Legumes can help to assist brown fat activity and increase the release of glucagon as well as stimulate the release of dopamine.

Generally, a women's metabolism traditionally declines at the rate of at least 5% per decade of life, starting at age 20. So, regular and sustained aerobic exercise will also help to boost metabolism along with strength training to increase muscle mass.

Susan, regarding your past 'diet' experiences and struggle with rebound fat – please don't despair, you are not alone in your experience. At your time of life I wouldn't recommend a 'generic' diet program, as they don't address hormonal weight causes. Ignoring hormonal influences can indeed actually fuel your general health and weight concerns. The personalised program that I will develop for you will recommend foods specifically chosen to address your hormonal imbalances thus assist you in achieving accelerated weight loss and better general health.

Congratulations Susan! I will contact you shortly to obtain your further health particulars so that your free comprehensive program can be compiled and forwarded to you. In the meantime enjoy your golf, it is indeed frustrating at times, but nevertheless a very healthy pastime.

"See" you all in next month's edition – till then, I wish you good health!



Narelle Stegehuis  
NDANPA

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