

## This issue: Women's Health

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"Our bodies are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners." – William Shakespeare



**Anthem members:** You can view and manage your benefits, access wellness tools and resources to improve your overall wellbeing. Simply scan this QR code with your smartphone's camera to download the Sydney Health app.

*Tip: Anthem.com and Sydney Health use the same username and password!*

# Let's Talk Women's Health

As women, the best way to be there and be strong for family, friends, and community is to make our own health a priority. This means taking time to get the healthcare we need. Here are four ways to help you stay healthy for the long term.



## Have a yearly well-woman exam

A well-woman exam with an OB-GYN is a proactive step you can take each year to protect your health. A well-woman exam focuses on:

- ✓ Breast health. Your doctor might perform a breast exam and may advise you to have a mammogram, based on your age and family history.
- ✓ Pelvic health. This may include a pelvic exam and Pap test to check for cancer of the cervix, as needed.
- ✓ Reproductive health. This is the time to bring up questions or concerns about birth control, fertility, hormones, irregular periods or **abnormal bleeding, and menopause symptoms**.

## Protect your mental health and well-being

Mental health is important to your overall well-being. It impacts how you think, feel, and act — and it affects your physical health, too. It's not just about hormones, either. Anxiety, depression, and stress are real. If you're not feeling like yourself, try these tips:

- ✓ Talk to your doctor about treatment that might work for you. Connect with a therapist online using the Sydney<sup>SM</sup>Health app.
- ✓ Reach out to a family member or friend.
- ✓ Set realistic goals for yourself to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- ✓ Take a walk or spend time outside.

## Decide to make healthy habits part of your lifestyle

Making healthy choices helps ensure your body works properly. It also reduces your risk of high blood pressure, weight gain or obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Follow these tips to feel your best:

- ✓ Avoid smoking or using tobacco.
- ✓ Choose wholesome food that includes lots of fruits and vegetables. Limit calories from added sugars and processed foods.
- ✓ Fit 30 minutes of physical activity into your everyday routine.
- ✓ Limit your alcohol intake to no more than one drink a day
- ✓ Try to get seven to nine hours of sleep each night

## Stay up on preventive care

While the well-woman exam centers around reproductive health, an annual physical with your primary care doctor is one of the best ways to stay healthy from head to toe, even if you feel well.

Your annual physical might involve:

- Check on blood pressure, height, and weight.
- Cholesterol and blood sugar testing.
- Talk of health goals, such as sleeping better or managing weight.
- Skin check for moles and skin cancers.
- Update of general and family health history.
- Other preventive care you may need includes:
  - Colorectal cancer screening, starting at age 45.3
  - Mammogram, starting at age 40 based on health and family history.2
  - Vaccines, such as the yearly flu shot, or vaccines for human papillomavirus (HPV), shingles, or tetanus.
- Talk with your doctor or check preventive guidelines for your age.

**Anthem members:** You can use the **Find Care** feature on the Sydney Health App to search for doctors in your plan's network. To ensure you get your well-woman exam. Simply tap **CARE** on the bottom navigation bar. Our patented Provider Match identifies the top doctors that may be best suited for you!

# What To Know About Menopause

While the thought of no longer having a menstrual period may appeal to many women, going through the menopause transition isn't always easy. The [National Institute on Aging](#) says menopause, or the end of menstruation, is a natural process that usually occurs in women between ages 45 and 55. Understanding its stages and symptoms and how to get relief can help you navigate this life change with confidence.

## Perimenopause Versus Menopause

The menopause transition covers three phases: perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause. If someone says they're "going through menopause," most likely they mean they're having the symptoms of perimenopause. Perimenopause starts 4 to 8 years before menopause, usually in your mid-40s. During this time, your ovaries make less estrogen and progesterone, which are key reproductive hormones. As these hormone levels drop, you might have symptoms like hot flashes, moodiness, and sleep problems.

Menopause is the official point at which you haven't had a period for 12 months. The average age for menopause is 51, but the [Endocrine Society](#) says that natural, normal menopause can happen from ages 46 to 55.

Post-menopause refers to the years after menopause. While menopausal symptoms often become milder or even go away, it's vital to keep seeing your doctor for [preventive healthcare](#). During this stage of life, your risk for heart disease, stroke, and osteoporosis rises. Routine checkups can find health issues early when they're easier to treat.

## Symptoms Of Menopause

How do you know when you've started menopause? Many women suspect they've begun as symptoms develop. Signs differ from person to person, but common symptoms of menopause include:

- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Irregular periods
- Loss of bladder control
- Mood swings
- Sleep problems
- Vaginal dryness
- Weight gain

## How to Cope With Menopause Symptoms

Even though menopause is a normal part of life, it can still be disruptive. A study by the [National Menopause Foundation](#) found that 75% of women experience hot flashes during menopause. Sixty-two percent say the symptoms interfere with their quality of life.

The good news is that you have options for managing the symptoms of menopause and maintaining your quality of life. The best treatment depends on your symptoms, family and medical history, and preferences. It helps to be mindful of your [whole health needs](#) and:

**Talk with your doctor.** Together, you can decide if hormone therapy, antidepressants, or alternative medicine might work for you.

**Make lifestyle changes.** Being more active, eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and consuming less refined sugar, processed food, and alcohol can all help control symptoms.

**Get enough sleep.** Try going to bed at the same time each night and using a fan to help keep the room as cool as possible.

**Manage stress.** Practicing mindfulness or yoga can help your sleep and keep other symptoms at bay.

Every woman's menopause transition is unique, but knowing the stages and symptoms of menopause helps each of us navigate this milestone with more confidence.

**Anthem members:** To discuss menopause and any symptoms you have, schedule a visit with your primary care physician (PCP) or OB-GYN. Within Sydney Simply tap **CARE** on the bottom navigation bar. Our patented Provider Match identifies the top doctors that may be best suited for you! You can go to [Anthem.com](#) to find a doctor, use the same patented Find Care feature. FYI: Sydney Health app and [Anthem.com](#) both use the same user name and ID.

# How Protein and Plants Can Help You Through Menopause

## Protein + Plant Diversity: The Missing Link in Menopause Nutrition

As you move through perimenopause and menopause, your body is undergoing significant shifts that affect muscle, metabolism, recovery, and gut health. Two key areas—protein intake and plant diversity—play a critical role in how well you adapt.

## Why Protein Matters More Now

With declining estrogen, the body becomes less efficient at maintaining lean muscle mass. This impacts strength, metabolic rate, and overall performance. Prioritizing protein helps counter these changes by supporting muscle repair, recovery, and daily function. For women aged 20-35, optimal daily protein intake is 1.6-2.2g/kg/day (0.7g-1g/lb/day), while older women, especially those in perimenopause and menopause, may need slightly higher amounts. This [2023 study](#) recommends that daily protein intake should fall within 1.4-2.2g/kg/day (0.6g-1g/lb/day), with protein distributed evenly across meals every 3-4 hours. This helps maintain lean body mass and supports body composition and weight loss. Studies have also shown that overall daily protein needs are higher during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle

## The Overlooked Piece: Your Gut Microbiome

At the same time, menopause brings changes to the gut. Microbial diversity may decline, inflammation can increase, and the body's ability to regulate metabolism becomes less flexible. These shifts influence:

- Energy levels and recovery
- How your body responds to training
- Fat storage and metabolic health

## Why Protein Alone Isn't Enough

Focusing only on protein misses a major part of the picture. Your gut microbiome plays a key role in hormone regulation, immune function, and overall resilience. That's where **plant diversity** comes in. Eating a wide variety of plant foods helps support a more diverse and resilient gut microbiome, improving how your body processes nutrients and adapts to hormonal changes.

Source: Dr. Stacy Sims, *Protein and Plant Diversity in Menopause*  
<https://www.drstacysims.com/newsletters/articles/posts/protein-and-plant-diversity-menopause>

## What Counts As a "Plant"?

Thirty plants a week might sound like a lot, but it's actually more simple than it sounds. It's not "just" veggies, in fact, it's categorized as follows:

- 1. Vegetables:** Leafy greens, cruciferous veggies (e.g., broccoli, cauliflower), root veg, zucchini, peppers
- 2. Fruits:** Berries, citrus, stone fruit, melon, apples
- 3. Legumes:** Lentils, chickpeas, black beans, edamame
- 4. Whole Grains:** Oats, quinoa, brown rice, farro
- 5. Nuts & Seeds:** Walnuts, almonds, chia, flax, pumpkin seeds
- 6. Herbs & Spices:** Turmeric, cinnamon, cumin, oregano
- 7. Fermented Plant Foods:** Sauerkraut, kimchi, miso

## The Power of Protein and Plant Diversity Together

Adequate protein intake helps to support lean mass maintenance, recovery, bone health, metabolic rate, and satiety. Eating a diet that's diverse with plants can help support your microbial diversity, immune function, inflammatory regulation, estrogen metabolism, and metabolic flexibility. For active women, especially in midlife, this combination can help support so many of the areas where people consistently struggle: body composition, training, performance, recovery, and long-term health span.

## The Takeaway

Menopause isn't just about hormones—it's about how multiple systems interact. To support your body during this transition:

- Prioritize consistent, adequate protein intake
- Increase the diversity of plant foods in your diet
- Think of muscle and gut health as connected, not separate

When you support both, you create a stronger foundation for performance, recovery, and long-term health.



**Anthem members:** visit Sydney or Anthem.com to access our free **Action Plans:** they can be rewarding!

**Action plans encourage you to Get Active, Reduce Stress, Better Sleep, Increase Energy, Achieve A Healthy Weight, Eat Healthy, and more!**

Navigate via Sydney select **MENU > ACCESS CARE > My Health Dashboard > Action Plans**, while you are there be sure to take advantage of all the **PROGRAMS tools and resources.**

# Mental Health Awareness Month

May is recognized as **Mental Health Awareness Month**, a time dedicated to raising awareness about mental health and promoting the importance of emotional well-being. This year's theme, "**More Good Days Together**," highlights the power of connection, community, and support in improving mental health outcomes. The month encourages open conversations to reduce stigma, educates the public about common mental health conditions, and emphasizes the importance of seeking help. Through shared resources, personal stories, and collective action, Mental Health Awareness Month reminds us that by supporting one another, we can create more positive, healthier days for everyone.

**Anthem Members:** Talking with a doctor or therapist can help. To find a care provider in your plan's network, use the **Find Care** feature on our **Sydney Health** mobile app or at [anthem.com/find-care](https://anthem.com/find-care).

Click this [HERE](#) to learn more about the behavioral health programs that are part of your plan.

Please utilize the **Emotional Wellbeing Resources (EWR)**, **ages 13+** and Mental Health Support through the **Virtual Care Center**.

**Sydney Health** app select **CARE**, then, **Virtual Care** or **ACCESS CARE, My Health Dashboard**, then **Featured Programs** to find the above program (EWR) and others available to you and your covered loved ones. Check out **Community Resources** as well.



## The Powerful 8-Minute Rule

In today's fast-paced environment, it's easy to stay constantly connected digitally—yet still feel disconnected personally. Leadership expert Simon Sinek shares a simple but powerful practice known as **The Powerful 8-Minute Rule**:

### Reach out to someone and ask, "Do you have 8 minutes?"

An "8-minute call" is a simple, intentional way to pause and connect with someone you trust—a brief check-in that offers space to feel heard, supported, and grounded. Without the pressure of a long conversation, it creates an easy, shared way to reach out and reconnect in the moment. Even these small moments of connection can have a powerful impact on well-being. Research shows that just five to ten minutes of positive social interaction can help ease stress, lift mood, and support the body's natural ability to regulate and reset.

Experts continue to highlight the importance of connection in overall wellness. Neuroscientist Andrew Huberman notes how our bodies respond to social interaction in real time, while physician Gabor Maté emphasizes that feeling seen and supported is essential to emotional health. More broadly, organizations like the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization recognize social connection as a key factor in reducing stress, anxiety, and long-term health risks.

**The takeaway is simple: you don't need a long conversation to make a difference—just a few minutes of genuine connection.**

MORE  
GOOD  
DAYS  
together

MIHA  
Mental Health Awareness

# Nourish your Body for Better Energy, Focus and Well-being

Many of us have been taught to think of the body like a machine—something to push, fix, or power through. But your body isn't a machine, it's a living system. And when it's supported in the right ways, everything improves—your energy, your focus, your mood, and even how you show up in your daily life. Here are a few simple, practical ways to nourish your body and feel your best:

## Start with Light

One of the most overlooked ways to support your health is also one of the simplest: **getting natural light in the morning**. Exposure to sunlight within the first hour of waking helps regulate your **circadian rhythm**, your body's internal clock, which impacts:

- Energy levels during the day
- Sleep quality at night
- Mood and focus

### Try this:

- Spend **10–20 minutes outside in the morning** (even on cloudy days)
- Step outside before checking your phone or starting work
- Let natural light hit your eyes (no sunglasses if comfortable)

## Fuel Your Body Consistently

Food isn't just about calories — it directly impacts your energy and concentration. Balanced meals help prevent energy crashes and keep your body running smoothly throughout the day.

**A simple approach:** At each meal, aim for:

- **Protein** (eggs, chicken, yogurt, beans)
- **Healthy fats** (avocado, nuts, olive oil)
- **Fiber + carbohydrates** (fruit, vegetables, whole grains)

**And don't forget hydration:** Even mild dehydration can lead to fatigue and brain fog. Start your day with a glass of water. Aim to drink water consistently throughout the day. Sometimes what feels like burnout is simply not eating or hydrating enough.

## Prioritize Rest

Sleep plays a critical role in your overall health. While you rest, your body:

- Repairs and restores
- Regulates hormones
- Supports brain function and memory

Without enough sleep, it's harder to focus, manage stress, and make decisions.

### Try this:

- Aim for **7–9 hours of sleep per night**
- Keep a consistent sleep and wake time
- Create a simple wind-down routine (dim lights, reduce screen time)

## Listen to Your Body

Your body is always communicating with you. Through hunger, fatigue, tension, and subtle shifts in how you feel, it's constantly giving you feedback. But many of us have been conditioned to override these signals. To push through. To stay busy. To stay in our heads. Learning to pause... to check in... to ask *"What do I need right now?"* is one of the most powerful ways to come back into alignment.

### Try this:

Pause once or twice during the day

Take a few deep breaths

Ask yourself: *"What do I need right now?"*

It might be a break, a meal, movement, or simply a moment to reset.

## Move in a Way That Supports You

Movement is one of the most effective ways to boost both physical and mental well-being. It helps with:

- Energy and mood
- Circulation and metabolism
- Stress reduction

And it doesn't have to be intense to be effective.

### Try this:

- Go for a short walk
- Stretch between meetings
- Take a few minutes to move your body during the day
- The goal isn't to push harder — it's to **move consistently** in a way that feels good.

# Salmon Salad with Beets, Arugula, Pistachio and Pomegranates

Active: 15 mins Cook Time: 15 mins Servings: 1 Salad

## Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp [olive oil](#)
- [Olive oil spray](#)
- 1 tsp [white wine vinegar](#)
- ½ tsp [Dijon mustard](#)
- ½ pound wild salmon, cut into 2 fillets
- [Kosher salt](#)
- 3 cups arugula
- 1 cup cooked beets, 6 to 8 oz, cut into small wedges
- 1 to 2 radishes, thinly sliced
- 2 oz fresh goat cheese, crumbled
- 2 Tbsp pistachios, toasted and chopped
- 2 Tbsp pomegranate seeds
- 1 Tbsp capers

## Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 450F. In a large bowl, combine 1 tbsp olive oil with the vinegar and mustard; set aside.
2. Set a heavy ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat and lightly spray or coat with olive oil.
3. Season the salmon on both sides with salt.
4. When the oil is very hot, add the salmon (skin side down if it's skin-on) and use your spatula to lightly press it down to help the skin sear.
5. Let cook undisturbed for 1 to 2 minutes, until the skin releases easily from the pan and the edges are opaque, then flip and transfer to the oven to finish cooking 2 to 4 minutes, depending on thickness and desired doneness. Set aside.
6. Add the arugula and beets to the bowl with the dressing and toss to coat; season to taste with salt.

## Nutrition Facts:

Serving Size ½ cup  
Calories | 437 | Total Fat 26.5g | Total Carbs 18g | Protein 33.5g | Dietary Fiber 4.5g



**This vibrant salmon salad is a nourishing, well-balanced option that aligns beautifully with the needs of women in perimenopause and menopause. It provides high-quality protein to support muscle and metabolism, omega-3 fats from salmon for heart and brain health, and antioxidant-rich ingredients like beets, arugula, and pomegranate seeds that help support overall cellular health. With a thoughtful balance of protein, healthy fats, and fiber, it can also help promote steady energy and blood sugar balance throughout the day.**