

# Top Lifestyle Tips for Hormonal Health



**Dr Hannah Short**  
*Specialist in Menopause  
& Premenstrual Disorders*

## General

**Stay hydrated:** Fresh water, herbal teas: minimise/cut out caffeine & alcohol (common triggers for worsening symptoms). Check out [joinclubsoda.com](http://joinclubsoda.com) for support and inspiration on mindful drinking.

If relevant, **seek support to stop smoking** (common trigger for hot flushes and worsens bone & heart health).

**Layer light clothing** (and bedlinen). Wear natural, breathable fibres when possible.

**Fill a small spray bottle with water** and use this to spritz yourself if you feel overheated.

If you suffer with hot flushes, **use a fan**; small portable ones are available to take out and about.

**Consider keeping a journal/using an app** (e.g. Balance) to see if you can identify any symptom triggers.

## Nutrition

### Centre your diet around plant-based whole-foods:

women who follow a plant-based diet have a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Recent evidence suggests that they may also suffer fewer premenstrual and menopausal symptoms; leafy greens and dark-coloured berries are particularly beneficial.

### Include a serving (or two) of beans/lentils/hummus

in your daily diet – a fantastic source of fibre, protein and micronutrients. If you do not already regularly consume these and/or suffer with bloating, build up intake slowly and consider short-term digestive enzymes (e.g. BeanAssist); see also Dr Megan Rossi's excellent book: *Eat Yourself Healthy* (focuses on improving gut health).

**Think “right carbs, good fats”** not “low-carb, high fat” or “no fat”: complex carbohydrates (e.g. root vegetables, beans, oats, wholegrains) and plant-based fats (e.g. nuts, seeds, avocado, good quality olive oil) are essential for good hormonal health.

**Consider switching cow's milk** for fortified soya/oat/hemp milk (more heart-healthy).

**Include minimally processed soya foods** in your diet: e.g. edamame beans, tofu, tempeh, miso – helpful for menopausal symptoms, heart and breast health.

**Flavour your food** with a multitude of *herbs & spices* (rich in polyphenols – plant-based micronutrients).

### Eat the rainbow AND the alphabet:

fill your plate with a wide variety of brightly coloured fruit & veg. Aim to include at least ten different types of vegetable in your meals each week (aim for 30 varieties over the month). Diversity is key to a healthy gut microbiome (and good hormonal & emotional health).

**Minimise refined carbohydrates and junk food** (e.g. added sugars, white bread, baked goods, take-aways).

**Avoid processed meats** and all factory-farmed (intensively-reared) meat, fish, dairy & eggs.

**Aim to eat all meals within a 12-hour window** e.g. between 7am & 7pm. This helps with weight control.

## Recipe book recommendations

(many of the authors also have social media accounts worth following):

**The Happy Pear: Recipes for Happiness** - David & Stephen Flynn

**The Oh-She-Glows Cookbook** – Angela Liddon

**River Cottage: Much More Veg** – Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

**Forks Over Knives: The Cookbook** – Del Sroufe

**The Doctor's Kitchen: Eat to Beat Illness** – Dr Rupy Aujla

**Bosh! Healthy Vegan** – Henry Firth & Ian Theasby

**Virtually Vegan** – Heather Whinney

**The Green Roasting Tin** – Rukmini Iyer

**Quick & Easy** – Deliciously Ella



## Supplements

**Recommended for everyone, irrespective of diet** (if no specific doses/preparations prescribed by your doctor):

**B12**

Vitamin B12: Aim for 10 micrograms (mcg) daily or at least 2000 micrograms once a week

**D3**

Vitamin D3: Aim for 10-20 mcg/400-800 IU October-April (in spring/summer ensure sun exposure to skin on arms/legs/back for at least 20 minutes daily; continue to supplement if not possible)

**Iodine**

Iodine: RDA 150 mcg daily (important for bone and thyroid health)

**Omega 3**

Omega 3 Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs): Algae derived (sustainable) combined EPA & DHA (250-500 mg/daily) or 1-2 tbsps of freshly ground flaxseed (e.g. added to cereal/smoothies/salad/soups) and 6 walnut halves daily.

## Sleep

**Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each night**

**If you suffer from hot flushes/night sweats, sleep naked or wear cotton nightclothes.**

Consider investing in a cold gel pack or cooling pillow. Avoid hot drinks before bed; take sips of cold water instead.

**Ensure your bedroom is comfortably cool.**

Keep the window slightly open and/or a fan near your bed.

**Switch off electronic devices/screens at least one hour before bed** and/or consider wearing blue-light blocking glasses in the evening.

**Do not consume caffeine (including cola) after midday**

**Aim to get outside in the morning daylight (whatever the weather) for at least 20 minutes each day.**

If this is not possible, try and have your breakfast/morning drink close to a window/in a naturally lit area.

**Avoid alcohol before bed;**

not only does it reduce good-quality sleep, it is an endocrine (hormone) disrupter and can affect the efficacy of medication, including HRT.

**Get up and go to bed at approximately the same time each day,** including weekends, to establish a routine.

**Avoid smoking.**

Nicotine acts as a stimulant and withdrawal can lead to early wakening.

**[sleepio.com](https://sleepio.com) is a digital, evidence-based, CBT programme (available on the NHS in some areas)**



## Exercise/Movement

**Move your body daily** – this is important for mental & physical well-being, as well as symptom control.

**If you don't already have an exercise regimen, start slowly** – even a ten-minute walk around the block has its benefits: [NHS:Active10](#) or consider a five minute morning online yoga session e.g. [Yoga with Adriene](#)

**Weight-bearing exercise** (e.g. hiking, running, dancing, weight-training, tennis) – at least three times weekly – is essential for bone health after menopause. Swimming and cycling are great forms of exercise for heart health and general well-being, but will not prevent osteoporosis.

**Check out the Couch to 5K programme** or consider joining your local [Park Run](#) or [GreatRun Local](#) - fantastic not only for exercise, but also community-building, social inclusion and gets you out into nature (which has enormous benefits for our mental health). Do not be put off if you do not run (yet!); many people walk or walk-run around the courses. Children and dogs are welcome too.

**Balance and core-strength are increasingly important as we age, and reduce the risk of falling in later life.** Another reason to consider a regular yoga practice, or why not sign up to a local/online Pilates or tai chi class?

## Stress Reduction/Self Care

**5-10 minutes of daily mindfulness meditation/ breathing exercises can provide enormous benefits and lower the stress response:**

Insight Timer, Calm and Headspace are all meditation apps you can trial for free. Clarity is an app designed specifically with menopause in mind.

**Stress reduction is important for all of us and is paramount in managing hormonal upheaval**

**Take at least 15-30 minutes a day, every day, to do something you enjoy (and solely for you)** e.g. reading a novel, gardening, playing an instrument, having a bath with relaxing essential oils, listening to your favourite music/podcast, walking in nature.

*Be kind to yourself!*

### Suggested reading

**The 4 Pillar Plan, The Stress Solution** and/or **Feel Better in 5:** *Dr Rangan Chatterjee*  
**Sorted: The Active Woman's Guide to Health:** *Dr Juliet McGrattan*  
**The Gifts of Imperfection:** *Brené Brown*

**Podcasts for health, wellbeing & inspiration)**

[Feel Better, Live More](#)  
[The Doctor's Kitchen](#)  
[The Holistic Healing Project](#)