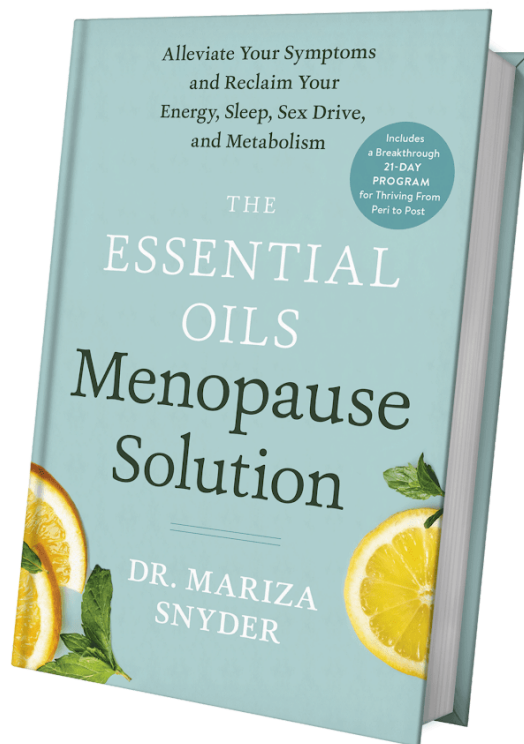


Bonus Chapters from

The Essential Oils Menopause Solution

By Dr. Mariza Snyder



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Essential Oils Menopause Solution Bonus Chapter: **Clearing Up the Most Common Menopause Myths**

Brace yourself; I'm about to get fired up! The heinous menopause myths pervading our society for centuries have become firmly grounded in our cultural belief systems. Even medical professionals accept the unfounded thoughts and misconceptions about menopause—despite the lack of research to support them. Western culture in particular perpetuates the perception of women's deterioration around age 50, dubbing menopause a four-letter word, a curse. It is a punchline, a snide remark, an excuse, a platitude used to dismiss women.

I am *done* accepting this view of middle-age and these lies.

It's time to annihilate this misinformation with cold, hard facts topped with research and medical experience.

Arm yourself with these truths before you speak with your healthcare provider. This information is just as much a part of your foundation as the 21-Day Hormone Makeover Plan you'll find at the end of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*. Knowing what the research says and what your options are will give you the confidence to discuss what you're feeling and what you need with poise and grace. It's time to flip these myths and get real about your body and your health.

What Menopause Is—and Isn't

MYTH: Menopause hits you like a Mack truck.

Menopause doesn't happen like it does on television. You don't just wake up one day covered with sweat, gasping and sobbing into your floral comforter. You don't wake up one day in a downward spiral of irrationality and emotional instability, causing sidelong glances, knowing nods, and eye rolls. You just don't.

Menopause is a journey along the road of life. It begins with perimenopause, a slow, gradual period of transition that unfolds over several years. It is "the before." Menopause is the day when you wake up and it has been 365 days since your last menstrual period. Everything after that day is menopause, though you may hear the term postmenopause also used to describe this time.

That said, women who have their ovaries removed or the blood supply to the ovaries disrupted due to radiation, chemotherapy, or drugs, will have a different experience. They enter menopause in the fast lane due to the sudden drop in hormone production. This is called surgical or chemical menopause.

But, for most women in the Western world, symptoms of this transition, such as irregular periods, hot flashes, night sweats, moodiness, fatigue, insomnia, weight gain, and low libido, appear around their mid-to-late 40s. You might not have all of these symptoms and they won't hit you all at once. A more likely scenario is you start to have a bit of insomnia or can't seem to get a good night's sleep. Then your period isn't consistent any more, and you download an app to start tracking your cycle to make sure you are not crazy. You start to notice your temper flaring more often and worry you're feeling extra stressed out. A year down the road, you start to forget things and worry dementia is around the corner. You aren't as interested in sex, anymore either, and figure it's probably just stress, but, what if it's something more? Symptoms come and go, teasing and frustrating the heck out of you. Just when you think you're back to normal, another symptom pops up and you're left wondering...what the? And that, my friend, is how the journey to menopause usually unfolds.

Perimenopause can last anywhere from four to ten plus years and ends when you've gone 12 consecutive months without a period. At that point—congratulations!—you have officially entered menopause. The average age of menopause is 51, but each woman is a beautiful, unique creature. The timing is specific to you and influenced by your genetics, health history, and lifestyle.

So, if you were hoping to enter menopause at lightning speed, I am sorry to disappoint you. But, having time to prepare gives you the opportunity to care for and nourish your body so you make the transition with ease. And please, please, please create a dialogue with your friends. Share your experiences. Talk to your daughters so that they know what to expect. Talk to your partner so that s/he knows you are on a journey and to be empathetic with you. We need to reframe the conversation and expand the dialogue to normalize the *real* perimenopause and menopause for us. It's time to tell our stories. It is our truth!

MYTH: You're supposed to feel like hell during perimenopause and menopause.

No. You're not.

Let me repeat that: *no, you're not!!*

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. There is no objective reason why you should feel terrible during perimenopause and menopause. Yes, as your ovarian function declines and your hormone levels shift, your body will change—there's no getting around that. But it is a natural, normal process your body was designed to navigate. You can and should experience optimal health during this time, including a good night's sleep, clear thinking, stable moods, and pain-free sex. You *always* deserve a body that works for you. But this depends a lot on the foundation from which your body is functioning. With that said, if you've entered menopause suddenly due to surgery, chemotherapy, or another form of medical intervention, it may take a moment to adjust to your body's sudden changes.

Depending on foundational strength, some women will breeze through perimenopause and menopause while others will struggle with a range of discomfort. Your experience will be unique to you. But understanding and acknowledging the root causes for hormonal imbalance and leveraging your self-care methods to reset your gut, liver, and stress can cement the certainty that you will enter this next phase of your life with ease and grace. How you handle your diet, stress levels, and exposure to environmental toxins directly contribute to how you feel and how your hormones function. It's time to take control of your healthcare if you haven't already begun.

This is the good news: We have a lot more control over our hormones and how they transition during this phase of our lives than we've been led to believe. With the proper nutrition, exercise, supplementation, and self-care, you can set up your body for success so that your symptoms are minimal. We know lifestyle changes can improve hormonal health and all of the recommendations in *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* will put you on the road to a menopause journey that is empowering, graceful, and full of wisdom.

But there is another element that you need to consider: cultural stereotypes. Culture plays a role in how we experience menopause and the negative messages ingrained in our brains leave us anticipating the worst. The more we are continuously fed the lie that we should feel miserable during "the Change" by society, the media, Madison Avenue, and Big Pharma, the more we begin to believe it. It breeds familiarity. And this is the marketing technique that they use to sell us something targeted at alleviating those symptoms. Instead of valuing the wisdom of age in our society, we instead are waved off, medicated, and pitied. Not on my watch. This ends now.

Just consider what you think of menopause. Is there anything glamorous or respected about it? Nope. You're probably imagining grey hair, wrinkles, decreased libido, mood swings, and embarrassing menstrual changes; cakes with black floral icing as you hit 40 or 50 to remind you that you are just getting older; and products made with chemical after chemical geared toward preserving your youth, vitality, and libido. Not to mention the continued avoidance of a dialogue about women's aging with anything but disdain. Men stroll into later age with a distinguished ambience, revered and respected. You don't see a lot of ads for men promising them decreased wrinkles, hair dye, and mood balancing options to destress their lives. Women are expected to shrivel up and grow old in a corner unless we shell out tons of money for every disguise in the book. I am sick and tired of this. We don't need this emotional and psychological stress.

Women who have more negative attitudes toward menopause report having more problems with menopausal symptoms.¹ One study found that women who hold negative beliefs about hot flashes (for example, that others will think they're stupid or incompetent when they're

¹ Ayers B1, Forshaw M, Hunter MS. The impact of attitudes towards the menopause on women's symptom experience: a systematic review. *Maturitas*. 2010 Jan;65(1):28-36. doi: 10.1016/j.maturitas.2009.10.016. Epub 2009 Dec 1. DOI: 10.1016/j.maturitas.2009.10.016
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/03/menopause>

having a hot flash) report more intense symptoms.² Negative cultural stereotypes destroy our self-worth and make us feel worse, mentally *and* physically. We must be so very careful with our own hearts. Don't skip over the self-affirmations that I include with my recommended remedies in Part II of this book because they feel silly. Take this advice from the culture you live in: the more you hear it, the more you will believe it!

Other cultures have a much different view of menopause and these differing views are reflected in the symptoms that women may or may not report and how they describe their personal experiences during this stage of life. A recent study conducted with postmenopausal women aged 55 to 65 living in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, France, and Italy found that symptoms varied by country.³ Guess where those women with the most symptoms and perceived "worse than expected" experiences live? In the U.S., the U.K., and Canada. Lead study author Dr. Mary Jane Minkin summed up the findings nicely: "In societies where age is more revered and the older woman is the wiser and better woman, menopausal symptoms are significantly less bothersome. Where older is not better, many women equate menopause with old age, and symptoms can be much more devastating."⁴

Research is showing that menopause is not a universal endocrinological experience for all women and that socioeconomic, genetic, and cultural factors greatly influence the individual experience. Rural Mayan women from Chichimila, Mexico, experienced few significant menopausal symptoms, though their test results mirrored those of women in Western culture in menopause. The difference? Their positive attitude towards this time of freedom and a cultural respect towards their revered status in society. Sadly, there is a reverse of this as well. In the Guatemalan Q'eqchi culture where even discussing women's health is considered taboo, the women suffered greatly due to dual root causes: nutrient deficiencies compounded by anxiety towards potential symptoms and intense dread when symptoms surfaced. Women hesitant to even discuss the topic with researchers confessed not even knowing about menstruation or menopause until it suddenly happened. Education came in the form of limited hearsay. Warned not to talk about it or seek medical attention, they mentioned intense dread of certain symptoms such as vaginal dryness or decreased libido, since their husbands would accuse them of infidelity. Imagine the emotional trauma of that event, and the resulting exacerbation of symptoms coupled with public ridicule. Miseducation and lack of education can be vicious, but knowledge can be beautifully powerful.

² Hunter M1, Rendall M. Bio-psycho-socio-cultural perspectives on menopause. *Best Pract Res Clin Obstet Gynaecol.* 2007 Apr;21(2):261-74. Epub 2006 Dec 8. DOI: 10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2006.11.001 <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/03/menopause>

³ Prevalence of postmenopausal symptoms in North America and Europe
Minkin, Mary Jane MD, NCMP1; Reiter, Suzanne RNC, NP, MM, MSN2; Maamari, Ricardo MD, NCMP3
Menopause: November 2015 - Volume 22 - Issue 11 - p 1231–1238
doi: 10.1097/GME.0000000000000464

⁴ Rapaport, L. "Culture may influence how women experience menopause." *Health News*. 5 June 2015. Accessed November 2019.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-menopause-perceptions/culture-may-influence-how-women-experience-menopause-idUSKBN0OL1XH20150605>

My most favorite cultural view can be found in Japanese culture, where there is no word for “menopause.” Instead, they focus on *koneki*, meaning “renewal years” and “energy.” Similar to the explanation above, this time of cultural respect for women finds them typically asymptomatic and without the risks that Western women fear. Japanese women are among the healthiest in the world.

Interestingly, researchers discovered there was no term in Japanese to describe a hot flash so they used an English term, “hot flush,” to explain this Western and European symptom to the Japanese women being interviewed. Soon, “hot flush” began to appear in Japanese media. This scares me, because I do not want their beautiful *koneki* to be altered. I don’t want our negative cultural norms to introduce a symptom that was virtually nonexistent in their culture and influence their respect of age. And it can. Japanese women who migrate to the United States have more menopausal symptoms. Instead, I would much rather educate our media about *koneki* to embrace cultural differences and adopt new viewpoints.

Cultivating a more positive mindset around menopause can reduce your symptoms. I believe this. My mother has lived this. Research shows this. I encourage you to reset your view of menopause and embrace it as an opportunity to recognize your strength and maturity. Just reflect a moment on your personal growth in confidence, resilience, self-awareness, and wisdom. You are a superwoman! What you have already achieved will springboard you into the amazing opportunities ahead as long as you open your arms and mindset to embrace them. You have the power to live this journey the way you choose and fill this next chapter of your life with sexiness, strength, power, and joy.

MYTH: Menopause always starts at age 50.

Rarely is there an “always” when it comes to health, and age of menopause is no exception. The onset of menopause can occur across a wide age range utterly unique to you as an individual and depends upon your genetics, lifestyle factors, socioeconomic status, and health history. Everything from your BMI to your exposure to secondhand smoke, your usage of the birth control pill to your race and ethnicity can contribute to your magical menopause number. My advice? Be informed, but don’t sweat the number.

In the U.S., most women enter menopause between the ages of 48 and 55 years with the average age being 51.⁵ Early menopause usually refers to onset before age 45, while premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency occurs before age 40. Women of any age may enter menopause if for any reason, such as surgery or chemotherapy, they experience damage to their ovaries, compromised ovarian blood flow, or early cessation of estrogen production.

⁵ Palacios S, Henderson VW, Siseles N, Tan D, Villaseca P. Age of menopause and impact of climacteric symptoms by geographical region. *Climacteric* 2010;13:419-28. doi: 10.3109/13697137.2010.507886.

Of course, the above ages reflect the start of menopause, the moment in time when you have not had a period for 12 months. They do not account for the process of getting to that moment, which we call perimenopause. This also varies from woman to woman, and can last anywhere from a few years to ten. During this transitional phase, you may begin to experience menopausal symptoms—hot flashes, weight gain, poor sleep, and shift in sexual desire and satisfaction—even though you are still menstruating. But hopefully we are going to get your foundation firmed up so that you can saunter gracefully through this transitional period into the next phase of your life. If you are already in the thick of it, no worries. The approach is the same and I have already helped thousands of women to reclaim their health and vitality.

For many of the women in my tribe, the noticeable changes begin in their early 40s. The problem is that it's tough to attribute these changes to perimenopause alone, because our bodies have been plugging along for four decades developing issues like increased inflammation and gut issues, decreased metabolic resilience, and insulin resistance. Women tend to be the go-getters, the ones who balance the circus, doing all the things for all the people all the time. They neglect themselves first, leaving midlife to be particularly stressful, when work and family demands run high. With all of this going on, it's easy to ignore the early signs, allowing the impact to pile up and compound any normal hormonal fluctuations we're experiencing. That's why it's so important to build a strong foundation of healing and hormone-balancing wellness practices as early as possible. Otherwise you are left in a pile of symptoms feeling like you need to peel away the layers one at a time to get to the bottom of the mess.

MYTH: Menopause means you are officially old. It is the end of your vitality, beauty, femininity, sexuality, and passion.

Please. The only thing menopause ends is your ability to make a baby. Period.

Let me be realer than real: the feminine body is a miracle. The ability to conceive, nurture, and nourish a child is just one of the many miracles we were designed to do. If you let your mind begin to think about all of the other complex biological functions it executes every single day, you can rest assured that your estrogen level doesn't dictate your vitality. Our bodies are supposed to experience a decrease. The important thing is loving yourself enough to prepare for and sustain this transitional journey. Here are just a few of what menopause really means.

Freedom from periods. I won't judge if you want to bonfire your leftover pads and tampons, period panties, menstrual cup, period jeans, and Midol. I will come and dance around the fire with you. No more anxiety over planning around your cycle. No more missed life experiences because of cramps or heavy flow. No more pants ruined because of leaks. No more trips to the tampon aisle. No more restricted sex. Do it when you want, where you want, how you want with no worry of an unexpected pregnancy. (I still recommend precautions to avoid STDs!)

Postmenopausal zest. Say what? Renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead coined this term in response to an ageist/sexist comment by talk-show host David Frost in July of 1971. He questioned her ability to achieve a breadth of work that would have exhausted someone half her age, to which she retorted, “It might have killed me too at that age! I attribute my energy to postmenopausal zest!” She threw a verbal brick in the 1970s glass house by mentioning the word “menopause” on television, and used it as a springboard to both educate the public and empower women to harness their own zest. And for those not yet there, to look forward to the zesty time of life. Think about it. Now that your body isn’t spending its energy focusing on reproduction each month, it has energy to spare.

Hormonal rebalance. During perimenopause, your reproductive hormones will take a dip as they begin their rebalancing process and your body will adjust to the change. Just how wild a rollercoaster ride this is and just how erratic your symptoms may be has a lot to do with your foundation and your mindset. Once you reach menopause, your reproductive hormones will stabilize, easing some of the symptoms you may have been experiencing during perimenopause. But remember not to blame these hormones for everything! Dial into the other hormones that matter and the root causes disrupting them. Supporting your body with daily habits that support a strong foundation and reset your gut, liver, and stress is key to sauntering into the next stage of your life with ease and grace.

Reinventing yourself. With reproduction off your plate and symptoms easing, menopause offers the opportunity to focus on you. Menopause is the gateway to greater happiness and worth. In one 20-year study, researchers found that women grew significantly happier as they progressed from midlife to late-life, associating the positive mood to having more “me” time. In addition, it afforded them the ability to prioritize their own needs as work and family responsibilities wound down.⁶ It is time to inventory your needs and identify what brings you joy. Honor the wisdom you’ve gained through your life experience and fully step into it. Use your wisdom and newfound energy to prioritize self-care and claim the life of your dreams. Once upon a time, when women’s life expectancy was significantly shorter, menopause may have occurred at the “end” of life. But now, as we’re living longer and well into our 80s and beyond, menopause truly is mid-life. Spend the next few decades happy, empowered, and thriving. Why? *You are worthy.*

Society may have used us as the brunt of their old-age jokes for years, but that ends now. I forbid it. And you should, too. It’s about time that we respect the wisdom that comes with age and embrace the femininity of the curvaceous, softer, and distinguished female form that develops as we age. Softer does not mean unattractive. Older does not mean invisible. Fertility does not mean worth.

⁶ <https://www.futurity.org/women-aging-mood-1525342-2/>

Campbell KE1, Dennerstein L1, Tacey M2, Szoek CE3. The trajectory of negative mood and depressive symptoms over two decades. *Maturitas*. 2017 Jan;95:36-41. doi: 10.1016/j.maturitas.2016.10.011. Epub 2016 Oct 24. DOI: 10.1016/j.maturitas.2016.10.011

Menopause is not an end; it's the beginning of a new, energized, revitalized you. Trust that, at every phase in your life, you are worthy of a body that simply works for you. You are worthy of feeling energized, joyful and healthy. As Brené Brown affirms in *Rising Strong*, "The most dangerous stories we make up are the narratives that diminish our inherent worthiness. We must reclaim the truth about our lovability, divinity, and creativity."

When you feel good about who you are and you feel worthy of your healing journey, you naturally take better care of yourself. Self-nurturing is the most important part of self-care. I invite you to take a look at your daily rituals. Are you taking time for the things that bring joy into your life? Are you moving and nourishing your body with healing foods? Are you sleeping enough each night? If not, it's time to take a moment and decide that you are worthy of self-care and of the rituals that bring you joy. Throughout this book I will be sharing rituals to connect into your healing potential and joy. Choose the rituals that align with how you want to feel.

Take time each day to say, "I am enough. I am energized and inspired. I am fully supported in all areas of my life. I am worthy of feeling good." Honor yourself and own your power. Center your mind and soul with prayer or spirituality, as research has shown that those who do have fewer mental health issues and springback quicker from health issues.

If you are experiencing menopause earlier than expected for any reason, I completely recognize and empathize that you may be grieving a loss. A loss of fertility. A loss of normalcy. A loss of possibility. This is a raw feeling and one that you do not have to experience alone. Talk, honey. Talk to your girls. Talk to a counselor. Talk to your doctor. Talk to a higher power. And, above all else, talk to yourself. Self-affirmations are so very powerful, and you will see that I incorporate them with many of the remedies offered in Part II of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*. Emotional trauma can become a root cause if you don't treat it head-on, so get ahead of that roller coaster. You will thank yourself later. But most of all, remember that you are worthy.

MYTH: Weight gain is inevitable.

Now, let me be real. Declining estrogen *does* trigger fat storage in our mid-section and leaves us less satisfied and full after a meal, meaning we may eat more than we normally would. But this does *not* mean that you need to find a way to make the middle-aged muffin top a new fashion trend. Instead of stressing over inevitable hormone changes, tweak your lifestyle to support total hormone balance and a healthy weight. Let's revisit the hormone imbalances that contribute to unwelcomed weight gain and the root causes driving them.

For starters, suboptimal nutrition powered by chronic stress seems to be a woman's biggest enemy. The more you stress, the more your body cements itself in survival mode, and the more your nutrients are used to prepare for the worse-case scenario rather than fuel the best of you. A fast-paced lifestyle often pushes us to grab food on the go while stress is high. Since there

are no veggie vending machines, our main staples include high carbs and sugar. Sadly, these two lead to high blood sugar, high insulin, and fat storage.

Chronic stress itself is enough to make your favorite jeans tight. High levels of cortisol, the hormone released in response to perceived stress, not only increases belly fat in its own right, but also raises blood sugar levels and thus insulin, compounding the effects of a high-carb diet.

Ever started an exercise program or the latest diet only to find it made no difference on your midsection? Yup. Because you have to address the hormonal component before your body will change its pre-programmed survival instincts. Your body is trying to keep you alive. Eating a plant-based, whole foods diet to control blood sugar and insulin, reducing stress, and adding strength-training to our exercise regime to build muscle and boost metabolism are just a few ways to maintain a healthy weight. My 21-Day Hormone Makeover in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* will get you on the right track, but it is definitely a lifestyle change.

How important is it? Very. Adjusting your diet significantly decreases your risk for a variety of health issues, including type 2 diabetes, dementia, heart disease, and osteoarthritis. And don't forget what I have been telling you over and over again: getting your foundation in order and resetting your gut, liver, and stress will drastically reduce menopausal symptoms. Estrogen is stored in fat, so obese women will have more estrogen and therefore more symptoms such as hot flashes, often sooner and more severe.⁷

Let your body do what it is supposed to do while you feed it nutrient-dense, hormone-friendly fuel. Changing your mindset towards nutrition will help you lose weight without even trying to lose weight. Try the 21-Day Makeover and see what happens. Most women find themselves a few pounds slimmer after eating delicious meals that have revitalized their energy and vitality.

The Truth About the Options for Easing Your Way

MYTH: Endometrial ablation is the solution for heavy bleeding during perimenopause.

Endometrial ablation is an outpatient procedure that cauterizes (ablates) the lining of the uterus (endometrium) in order to prevent growth and future bleeding. Doctors can use a variety of techniques to achieve this end; I prefer the NovaSure procedure which uses radiofrequency. In certain situations, I do agree that endometrial ablation can be a viable

⁷ Menopause: The Journal of The North American Menopause Society

Source Reference: Saccomani S et al "Does obesity increase the risk of hot flashes among midlife women? A population-based study" Menopause: The Journal of The North American Menopause Society 2017; DOI: 10.1097/GME.0000000000000884

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/endocrinology/menopause/65721>

option. For example, when a woman has developed anemia that can't be successfully reversed due to extreme bleeding, all other options such as supplementation and/or lifestyle changes have been exhausted, and she has decided that she is done reproducing.

What worries me is that endometrial ablation seems to be the new “facelift for your uterus” procedure that middle-aged women are electing to have simply because they are tired of their periods. It's even touted by some doctors as “one of the great gynecological success stories”⁸ for reducing menstrual flow. You need to understand that heavy bleeding during perimenopause is *not* abnormal due to sporadic ovulation and increased estrogen levels. When your body doesn't release an egg, the endometrium continues to grow, causing the next period to be heavier than previous ones. This is *normal*.

I understand the allure of not having to slink off to the bathroom to recover from leaking pads or tampons, and that ditching the crampy, achy menstrual mess each month would be a relief. But please be sure that you have tried everything else to firm up your foundation—diet, exercise, supplements, stress management, self-care—to address estrogen dominance and hormonal imbalance before jumping into a procedure that cannot be reversed.

Knowing what to expect in perimenopause will help you prepare for it. And menopause is the end in sight. That's when your bleeding will stop.

Normal vs. Heavy Flow

What do we mean by “heavy” flow, anyway? A normal menstrual cycle should last 21-35 days, bleeding an average of 7 days from start to finish. Average flow volume is 25-80 mL⁹, though that can be very difficult to gauge. At full capacity, the average tampon or pad holds 5 mL with super tampons holding 10 mL. If you are running through a few extra tampons (and most of us don't change a pad or tampon when it's fully soaked), you're likely going through the normal heavy bleeding associated with perimenopause. That said, you do need to seek medical attention at any age if you experience any of the following:

- extremely heavy bleeding especially when clots pass (menorrhagia), gauged by soaking through a pad or tampon every hour for more than 24 hours
- bleeding after intercourse
- spotting or bleeding between cycles
- cycles that are shorter than 21 days
- periods that last longer than your normal cycle length (generally 5-7 days)
- missed period for more than three months (amenorrhea)

⁸ Kumar, Vinod et al. “Endometrial ablation for heavy menstrual bleeding.” *Women's health (London, England)* vol. 12,1 (2016): 45-52. doi:10.2217/whe.15.86.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5779558/>

⁹ Chen, Y.J., Li, Y.T., Huang, B.S., Yen, M.S., Sheu, B.C., Chow, S.N., Wang, P.H., and the Taiwan Association of Gynecology Systematic Review Group. “Medical treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding.” *Taiwanese Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*. 2015 Oct.; 54(5):483-8. Doi: 10.1016/j.tjog.2015.08.001.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26522096>

MYTH: A hysterectomy is the solution to heavy bleeding and fibroids during perimenopause.

Nope, it's not. In some severe cases, the removal of all or part of the uterus most definitely should be seriously considered, for example in cases of life-threatening invasive cancer. But, when it comes to heavy bleeding and fibroids, please, consider and exhaust all options before agreeing to a major surgery. There are lots of other natural and less invasive options available to treat these issues.

I know this isn't going to be what you want to hear, but menstrual irregularities, including heavy bleeding, are a *normal* part of perimenopause. You may have thought that as you got older and closer to menopause your period would become lighter and lighter until it eventually stopped completely. This is rarely the case. Fluctuating levels of estrogen in relation to progesterone cause all sorts of irregular bleeding patterns. So do skipped ovulations, when the endometrium continues to thicken without a period to slough it off, resulting in heavier flow. You may skip a period, then have one with a really heavy flow, followed by a light one. During perimenopause, about 20 percent of women have heavy bleeding¹⁰ and most women bleed profusely toward the end of perimenopause due to estrogen dominance. Eating a nutrient-rich diet, reducing your stress levels, and supporting your gut, liver, and thyroid function will help to moderate estrogen and stabilize your menstrual flow. Once you are in menopause, the bleeding will stop on its own.

In addition to hormonal changes, fibroids are a frequent cause of heavy bleeding. They are very common and their likelihood increases with age until menopause. Nearly 70-80% of women are affected by uterine fibroids in their reproductive years.¹¹ In one US study, Caucasian women showed an incidence of uterine fibroids of 40% by age 35 and almost 70% by age 50 while Black women had an incidence of 60 percent by age 35 and over 80% by age 50.¹² In many cases, fibroids don't cause any symptoms so you may not even know you have them. That can change during perimenopause when women are likely to experience estrogen dominance. Estrogen/progesterone imbalance, which causes heavy bleeding, is the most common symptom, and many doctors recommend an ultrasound, when the fibroids are detected. After menopause, fibroids usually shrink due to decreased estrogen levels.

¹⁰ Nicula, R. and Costin, N. "Management of endometrial modifications in perimenopausal women." *Clujul Medical*. 2015; 88(2): 101-110. Published online 2015 Apr. 15. doi: 10.15386/cjmed-421. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4576794/>

¹¹Katz, T.A., Qiwei, Y., Treviño, L.S., Walker, C.L., and Al-Hendy, A. "Endocrine disrupting chemicals and uterine fibroids." *Fertility and Sterility*. 2016 Sep 15; 106(4): 967-977. Published online 2016 Aug. 21. Doi: 10.1016/j.fertnstert.2016.08.023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5051569/>

¹² Baird DD1, Dunson DB, Hill MC, Cousins D, Schectman JM. Am J Obstet Gynecol. 2003 Jan;188(1):100-7. High cumulative incidence of uterine leiomyoma in black and white women: ultrasound evidence. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12548202>

It's very important for you to know that hysterectomy is not the default answer or your only option in these circumstances because so many women don't know it. Heavy, irregular bleeding and fibroids are the most common reasons women have hysterectomies in mid-life. Over 400,000 hysterectomies were performed in the United States in 2010 (the most recent year we have figures),¹³ and about a third of all women will have a hysterectomy by the age of 50¹⁴. Even more eye-popping? Nearly all of them are elective.¹⁵

While some doctors believe that uterine cancer is the only reason to recommend a hysterectomy, most clearly do not. An estimated 90 percent are performed for other reasons, greatly increasing a woman's risk for serious complications. For example, several studies confirm the risk of heart attack doubles post-hysterectomy for women in their 40s while greatly increasing the risk for women of other age groups due to increased lipids in their bloodstream and higher blood pressures.¹⁶ These studies have been replicated for decades and all of the results are the same: hysterectomies increase your risk of heart-related issues. Another thing to consider: about half of all hysterectomies involve the removal of the ovaries, too. Even though you are more likely to develop heart disease, stroke, or lung cancer than ovarian cancer, many doctors use the "take it while she's open" option.¹⁷ Say, what?!

Your body has these organs for a reason and removing them shouldn't be taken lightly. There are many ways to treat underlying issues that preserve the uterus and ovaries because *hormones—and the organs that orchestrate them—are important*. Not just for reproduction. For your total hormonal health. Preserving your uterus and ovaries should be a primary goal rather than a throwaway option. Don't take this decision lightly. Try natural and less extreme options to manage heavy bleeding and fibroids while maintaining hormonal balance before

¹³ For in-text citation: Wright, J.D., Herzog, T.J., Tsui, J., Ananth, C.V., Lwein, S.N., Lu, Y., Neugut, A.I., and Hershman, D.L. "Nationwide trends in the performance of inpatient hysterectomy in the United States." *Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 2013 Aug; 122(2.0.1): 233-241. Doi: 10.1097/AOG.0b013e318299a6cf. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3913114/>

¹⁴ For in-text citation: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "QuickStats: Percentage of women aged \geq 50 years who have had a hysterectomy, by race/ethnicity and year - National Health Interview Survey, United States, 2008 and 2018." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 18 Oct. 2019 68(31); 935. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6841a3.htm>

¹⁵ Stewart, Elizabeth A et al. "Reassessing hysterectomy." *Minnesota medicine* vol. 95,3 (2012): 36-9. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3804006/>

¹⁶ https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/fulltext/2005/08000/Ovarian_Conservation_at_the_Time_of_Hysterectomy.4.aspx and the following: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12888128>; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10942866>; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8602000>; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3574358>; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7457520>

¹⁷ Parker W, Feskanich D, Broder M, Chang E, Shoupe D, Farquhar C, Berek J, Manson J. Long-Term Mortality Associated With Oophorectomy Compared With Ovarian Conservation in the Nurses' Health Study. *Obstet & Gynecol*. 2013;121:709-716. Available online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23635669>.

resorting to major surgery and removal of your uterus and/or ovaries. Implementing the foundational lifestyle changes to support a healthy gut and liver and reduce stress will improve cycle regularity and flow, helping to relieve the symptoms of fibroids.

MYTH: The birth control pill is the solution to your perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms.

You can fix hormone imbalance without adding hormones. You do *not* need the pill or any form of hormonal contraceptive to ease your symptoms. I firmly believe that you should not put anything into your body unless you fully understand what it is supposed to do, what it could do, and how to use it appropriately.

The pill and other forms of hormonal birth control (the patch, vaginal ring, shot, injection, implant, or hormonal IUD) are *contraceptives*, intended to be used to prevent pregnancy. Yet, a lot of doctors would have you think they do even more, such as “fix” painful or heavy periods, PMS or PMDD, and irregular or missing periods. In fact, the majority of American women on the birth control pill, a whopping 58%, take it for reasons other than preventing pregnancy.¹⁸ Here’s the truth. They don’t solve these issues; they mask them by adding synthetic estrogen and progesterone to your body, preventing it from functioning the way it was designed. While these synthetic hormones may temporarily hide symptoms, your body has to work harder to overcome their effect. And that is why new symptoms begin to appear: migraines, decreased libido, vaginal dryness, abnormal uterine bleeding and spotting, thyroid dysfunction, blood clots and deep vein thrombosis, anxiety and depression, and the list continues. Once again, blinded by symptoms and the promise of a quick, easy solution, our healthcare system puts a one-size fits all solution ahead of treating you as an individual and looking for your root causes driving your symptoms.

You may find symptom relief by staying on the pill or starting to take it during perimenopause, but you have to be aware of the side effects and the fact that you are not solving the real reasons for your symptoms. Your stop-gap measure allows them to build-up, like erecting a makeshift dam to stop a flowing river. Eventually, the dam will burst and it won’t be pretty. Then you have to wade through the resulting damage to finally find that root cause. It takes time. And it is exhausting. I know, because I had to do it myself. And this is why I want you to know: natural solutions like the ones covered in this book will relieve symptoms by addressing the root cause of the problem without scary, unnecessary side effects.

In some cases, if natural solutions are not working as well as hoped, the pill may be considered to provide a short-term solution to severe symptoms, helping you to regain your equilibrium.

¹⁸ Jones, R.K. “Beyond Birth Control: The Overlooked Benefits of Oral Contraceptive Pills.” NY: Guttmacher Institute, 2011. https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/beyond-birth-control.pdf

But as a functional practitioner, I always encourage trying natural options first. And hormonal birth control is not your only option for contraception. But if you are on the pill for any reason know that it's generally recommended for women to go off it once they've reached menopause, probably between the ages of 51 and 55, and other forms of hormone therapy become options.¹⁹

Most importantly, you need to understand that you are the one in the driver's seat when it comes to your health. You should choose the contraceptive method that works best for you after fully understanding how and why it works. You have the freedom to change it at any time. The decision to use contraception and hormonal birth control methods—or any medication—is a personal one and should be undertaken with care, consideration, and the help and knowledge of your functional practitioner.

MYTH: You must be on Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to manage menopause.

The only reason you should be on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is you and your functional practitioner have discussed all of your symptoms, weighed all of your options, considered your risk factors and personal preferences, and determined it is right for you. You do not *need* to be on HRT. It is not required for good health, including strong bones, a healthy heart, or a sharp mind. Menopause is not a disease. Your body is not deficient and in need of an estrogen supplement to “fix” it. You can balance hormones *without* hormones!

HRT generally uses synthetic hormones to spot treat your troublesome symptoms in hopes that you find some relief, much like an over-the-counter drug. The problem is that it masks symptoms and often creates its own set of new symptoms, just like it did for my mom. Before you resort to HRT, you need to be sure that your root causes are handled while firming up your foundation with solid nutrition and self-care techniques to support your gut and liver, and lower stress. Flooding your body with synthetic estrogen or slathering on progesterone cream isn't a good long-term solution if your cortisol levels are constantly elevated due to stress, your insulin fluctuates wildly because of poor diet, and your liver is working overtime to clear toxins.

The natural solutions presented in *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* are ones that I have personally tried and that thousands of women in my community have used with success. From a functional medicine perspective, the place to start is with natural solutions that address the underlying root cause of the hormonal imbalances exacerbating your symptoms. As you'll learn throughout the book and especially in the 21-Day Hormone Makeover Program outlined in Part III, simple lifestyle changes will have you feeling better fast, without additional hormones. I view HRT as a last resort for short-term relief, and you should, too.

¹⁹ Allen, Rebecca H et al. “Contraception in women over 40 years of age.” CMAJ : Canadian Medical Association journal = journal de l'Association medicale canadienne vol. 185,7 (2013): 565-73. doi:10.1503/cmaj.121280

But before we leave this myth, I want you to know the truth about how HRT came to be. Scientists mistakenly assumed that estrogen deficiency was the cause of every menopause symptom under the sun, so they thought the answer was to replace naturally declining estrogen with synthetic estrogen. You see the problem already, right? First, our bodies are *designed* to have this natural decline. Second, many of us are actually estrogen dominant because of all of the xenoestrogens in our environment.

Now, for the scary stuff. The first estrogen replacement hit the market in 1942 and was made from a combination of estrogens derived from the urine of pregnant horses (yes, you read that correctly). Premarin is the best known brand. Until the 1970s, doctors prescribed HRT as the gold standard for any menopausal symptoms without questions asked. If you were middle-aged and had a hot flash, you got a smile, a scribble on a prescription pad, and a “Here ya go, sweetheart!” Yikes.

That began to change in the 1970s when studies began to link the estrogen used in HRT to cancer in the endometrium, with later studies showing increased risk of breast cancer, stroke, heart attack, and dementia.

Yet, HRT continues to be sold to menopausal women as the answer to all that ails them and has become a multi-billion dollar global business in the process. The allure of a quick fix and the almighty dollar overshadows the proven role of endocrine disrupting hormones and estrogen dominance in these symptoms and the mounting concerns me and many of my colleagues have.

Here are some of the most common questions I receive from women when it comes to HRT.

My doctor has told me that I need to be on hormone replacement therapy now that I am in menopause. I am not sure. What should I do?

I invite you to ask your healthcare provider some important questions about HRT including the ones I listed below:

- Why are you recommending HRT to me and how do you think HRT will benefit me? And if I choose to go on HRT, how long do you recommend I stay on it?
- Are there alternative recommendations you can offer me if I don’t want to take HRT?
- What are my current health risks given my health history and family history for heart disease, breast cancer, and osteoporosis?
- What types of HRT do you recommend and what are the risk factors for each?

I have been on HRT for over 10 years and my doctor says I need to stay on it. What should I do?

Current research suggests that it's not wise to continue HRT for long-term use. A Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study published in 2003 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that combination hormone therapy (containing synthetic estrogen and progesterone, known as progestin) had no meaningful benefit on the quality of life of postmenopausal women. There is an estrogen window, a period of time when using bioidentical estrogen can be beneficial in relieving menopausal symptoms and the associated risks are more minimal, of around 5 years from the start of menopause, or slightly before.

There is a strong history of heart disease in my family. Would HRT protect me?

Based on the WHI study, new findings suggest that synthetic HRT such as synthetic progesterone, called progestins (examples: Prempro, FemHRT, Combi-Patch), have been shown to potentially increase the risk of blood clots, stroke, and heart disease. I don't recommend that women with or without heart disease risks use synthetic progestins. I also don't recommend taking synthetic progestins for treating heart disease.

My mom had breast cancer and I heard that HRT can increase my cancer risk. Do I just skip it?

Given the findings of the WHI study, most doctors are generally cautious to recommend a combination drug like Prempro. In the WHI study it was clearly demonstrated that women taking a synthetic combination of hormones for five years increased their risk for breast cancer than those on the placebo. I would look into other natural means to support your hormones. Check out the resources in chapter TK on breast health and the Hormone Makeover Program

I have been on a combination of HRT since I started menopause four years ago and read that five years is the sweet spot for menopause symptom relief. Should I begin to taper off?

Five years after the onset of menopause is a sweet spot for slowly decreasing your dosage of hormones. I suggest that you start to taper off of the hormones and see how you feel. The estrogen window is approximately 5 years after the onset of menopause where bioidentical hormones offer benefits without significant risk. However, everyone's body is different and always consult with your practitioner based on your health history and any risk factors.

I recently had a complete hysterectomy at the age of 41 and I didn't plan to take hormones after menopause, but my circumstance has changed. What is safe for me?

Surgical menopause before the age of natural menopause is challenging and uncomfortable due to losing a significant amount of naturally-occurring reproductive hormones at an age when your body still depends on them. I would recommend working with a functional practitioner to find an optimal dosage of bioidentical estrogen (in the form of estradiol) and natural progesterone. Finding the right combination for your body will ease symptoms and support you until you reach the age you would likely have experienced natural menopause.

MYTH: Bioidentical hormones are a natural and safer option for HRT.

Yes and no. First, it's essential to solidify your foundational health before considering something like hormone replacement as an option.

Second, the word "natural" can be very misleading because every hormone used in hormone therapy, whether synthetic or bioidentical, is created in a lab. The difference is that synthetic hormones mimic the natural hormones your body produces, but have a slightly different chemical structure. Bioidentical hormones are still drugs, but they are made from phytoestrogens that are chemically identical to the ones produced by the human body. Made from yams and soy in the laboratory, bioidentical hormones have yielded some promising results. The problem is that they aren't regulated or researched well-enough yet to be sure of their long-term consistency. When looking at the current research on HRT, the science is very inconsistent and confusing to patients and doctors alike.

Until further extensive research comes out to prove bioidentical estrogen and progesterone are consistently safe to use, I recommend trusting your intuition now more than ever and trying natural solutions first. If your symptoms persist, it's worth taking that first step on the road to using bioidentical hormones and evaluating your risk factors and medical history, including family history, so that you can create a clear picture of your health needs and goals. While many are singing the praises of bioidentical hormones, we really need more evidence before calling them the "safer" alternative.

That said, If you are considering HRT, of the two primary hormones, bioidentical progesterone shows the most promise to alleviate perimenopausal symptoms and counterbalance estrogen dominance, a major contributing factor to the development of breast and uterine cancer. Natural bioidentical progesterone has been shown to have short-term benefits for memory loss, heavy bleeding, hot flashes, cardiovascular disease, and depression for women in perimenopause and menopause. I recommend a topical application for temporary symptom management. Progesterone cream is available over the counter in a 2-percent strength and you can apply anywhere on the body. My recommendation is on the inner arms, thighs, and stomach. I carry Progest-Restore in my Essentially Whole® supplement store to provide a researched, safe, trusted option to bring you fast relief from your symptoms.

Bioidentical estrogen can be beneficial in relieving menopausal symptoms with fewer risks if taken during the estrogen window, a period of time lasting for around 5 years, starting when a woman begins menopause, or slightly before. Beginning estrogen *after* the estrogen window closes may increase your risk for breast cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease and dementia.

The bottom line, though, is that all hormones, synthetic and bioidentical, have risks.

You also need to understand that not every woman needs HRT, but some do benefit from it once other hormonal imbalances and root causes have been addressed. Each of us is an individual. Short-term usage of HRT is nothing to be ashamed of and can definitely help you to

weather the symptom storm, but it should never be a permanent solution and you should always support your body with other natural solutions and lifestyle changes. You are in charge of your hormones and your healthcare! Trust yourself!

We deserve to feel vibrant, healthy, happy, and empowered to live our best life. The way to do that is to address why you are experiencing symptoms in the first place (remember, it's not all about the estrogen!), before, during, or after menopause, and focus on safer, more effective solutions.

MYTH: HRT is your only option for symptom relief.

HRT is *not* the only option for symptom relief. However, one thing is clear in the HRT debate: we still need more research on the role of hormones, specifically bioidentical hormones administered in low doses and for a temporary duration. For generations the decision to take HRT was a passive one made by the doctor. Women were considered “good patients” if they just did what the doctor and society told them to do. You already know how I feel about this. You are the CEO of your own healthcare. So, how is a modern woman to approach her options?

Ask yourself: are you looking to mask your symptoms or eliminate them completely? HRT masks symptoms, but can cause new ones to develop and may only give you relief temporarily. But non-hormonal treatments that I recommend in this book in Part II and III can help you to identify and treat the root causes of your symptoms, eradicating them completely and strengthening your body for the journey you are on. A nutrient-rich diet, addressing nutrient gaps with key supplementation, regular exercise, and stress-relieving self-care practices are just a few examples of the lifestyle practices shown to relieve the most common symptoms of perimenopause and menopause, including hot flashes, poor sleep, heavy bleeding, belly fat, and mood issues. They also provide significant long-term benefits, such as reducing your risk of various types of cancer and other chronic diseases, without the side effects of HRT.

If you've picked up *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*, you're about to find the natural solutions you have been searching for. From the symptom-by-symptom descriptions in Part II to the comprehensive healing protocol in Part III, you are about to begin your revitalization and take charge of your journey. Trust me. I've seen the amazing results that thousands of women have achieved just by following the simple changes outlined in this book—myself and my mom included!

MYTH: Every menopausal woman has hot flashes and hormones are the only cure.

Ohhhhhh, hot flashes! Did you know that only 60-80% of American women will experience a hot flash at some point during her journey through menopause—not everyone will have to suffer through them? Even though many will find relief after those final stages of

perimenopause and into early menopause, research has shown that it takes about 5 years post-menopause for them to disappear. And, yes, some women find that they linger into their 60s and 70s.^{20 21} Even if your hot flashes are occasional and mild, you know that just one is one too many! rest assured, there is hope no matter where you fall on the hot flash spectrum.

There's no consensus on the cause of this common symptom. From what I have seen in my research and from talking to thousands of women, there is a correlation between the following underlying conditions and the susceptibility to hot flashes: insulin resistance, a sluggish liver, and chronic stress. While doctors may call it an estrogen problem and prescribe hormones, I have found that women who address the above issues find relief from hot flashes and other symptoms as well. All three issues prevent your body from optimally functioning and can have a dramatic effect on your hormonal balance and overall well-being.

The good news is that Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* contains my 21-Day Hormone Makeover Program to help you address and rebalance these three areas. Revising your nutrition and how it nourishes your body, reducing your toxic load and learning to love your liver, and learning self-care techniques to ease the effects of chronic stress will help you to prevent hot flashes and other unwanted symptoms. Plus, there is an entire chapter in Part II dedicated to Hot Flashes where you will find an abundance of essential oil blends (like my Hot Flash Spritzer), supplements, herbs, and rituals to help you take back control of your body starting now.

I am also a huge believer in several mind-body techniques to lessen the frequency and intensity of hot flashes. My self-care techniques in *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* utilize deep breathing to help reduce the effects of chronic stress, while research has shown hypnosis to reduce hot flashes by as much as 74 percent.²² In another study, after just a few weeks of cognitive behavioral therapy, a common type of talk therapy, women reported significantly fewer hot flashes and night sweats, less depression and anxiety, better sleep, and more energy.²³ The key is finding the combination of techniques that work for you. I can't wait to be your guide and get you started on this journey! There's no one-size fits all when it comes to hot flashes, or any menopausal symptom for that matter, so you may have to try a few approaches before finding the best one for you. But, hormones are not the only cure.

²⁰ Thurston, Rebecca C, and Hadine Joffe. "Vasomotor symptoms and menopause: findings from the Study of Women's Health across the Nation." *Obstetrics and gynecology clinics of North America* vol. 38,3 (2011): 489-501. doi:10.1016/j.ogc.2011.05.006

²¹ Ellen W. Freeman, Mary D. Sammel, Richard J. Sanders. Risk of long-term hot flashes after natural menopause. *Menopause*, 2014; 1 DOI:10.1097/GME.0000000000000196 <https://www.womenshealth.northwestern.edu/blog/hot-flashes-years-after-menopause>

²² Elkins, G.R., Fisher, W.I., Johnson, A.K., Carpenter, J.S., and Keith, T.Z. "Clinical hypnosis in the treatment of postmenopausal hot flashes: a randomized controlled trial." *Menopause*. 2013 Mar; 20(3): 291-8. Doi: 10.1097/GME.0b013e31826ce3ed. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23435026>

²³ Hunter MS1, Coventry S, Hamed H, Fentiman I, Grunfeld EA. Evaluation of a group cognitive behavioural intervention for women suffering from menopausal symptoms following breast cancer treatment. *Psychooncology*. 2009 May;18(5):560-3. doi: 10.1002/pon.1414.

Myth: You can't do anything about painful sex in menopause.

Yes, you can! And no, you don't have to become celibate during the one time of your life when you can enjoy sex without the possibility of pregnancy. That said, 40% of postmenopausal women report pain with intercourse.²⁴ That's millions of women experiencing soreness, aching, throbbing, or burning during or after sex. It breaks my heart that most will suffer in silence and not seek help. Because there is help, lots of it, to make sure sex is pleasurable for you no matter your age.

The most common reason for painful sex in women over 50 is vaginal changes due to declining estrogen. Lower estrogen levels reduce your vagina's ability to secrete lubricant, expand and contract, and grow new cells. In addition, over time, blood flow to the area diminishes. The result? Vaginal tissue becomes thinner, dryer, less elastic, and more prone to inflammation. And sex can become uncomfortable or painful. Building a solid foundation of good, hormone-supporting health practices is always the first step on any healing journey. (Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* will guide you.) The next is finding healing approaches that work specifically for you and your lifestyle.

But please also realize that hormonal changes due to menopause may not be the issue or may not be the only issue at play. You could also be dealing with the results of injury or trauma, a skin condition, infection, or an allergic reaction, or even something more serious like a sexually-transmitted disease, pelvic floor dysfunction, endometriosis, or uterine fibroids. Even chronic stress or unresolved relationship issues may also be factors that can be addressed. To get to the root of painful sex, you have to be brave enough to have an honest discussion with both your partner and your healthcare provider.

Even though it can be difficult or embarrassing to talk about these issues, you need to do it for yourself and for your vagina! We want it to shine and have juicy, satisfying sex for the health of your body and your mind, as well as your interpersonal relationships. Our bodies were designed to have sex, but having safe and healthy sex needs to be your goal. Your trusted healthcare provider should feel the same way and should always provide a safe space for open and frank discussion and be well-versed in the ways to support you. If that's not your experience, it's time to find a new doctor. Opening up for more feel-good sex is so worth it. The physical and emotional benefits it brings are off the charts!

MYTH: Women should take hormones after menopause.

²⁴ Kingsberg SA, Wysocki S, Magnus L, Krychman ML. Vulvar and vaginal atrophy in postmenopausal women: findings from the REVIVE (Real Women's Views of Treatment Options for Menopausal Vaginal Changes) survey. *J Sex Med.* 2013;10(7):1790-1799; Nappi RE, Kokot-Kierepa M. Vaginal health: Insights, Views & Attitudes (VIVA)—results from an international survey. *Climacteric.* 2012;15(1):36-44.

I get worried when I hear from women who are past menopause—some by decades!—and still on hormone therapy. HRT is intended to be a short-term way to alleviate menopausal symptoms, especially hot flashes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness. As I'm sure you have realized by now, I do not consider HRT to be a good first-line treatment option as there are natural approaches available that will relieve symptoms while getting at the root cause. But, if you've exhausted those options and decided to go the HRT route, most guidelines recommend HRT at the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time necessary.

Many symptoms, such as hot flashes, significantly lessen or go away completely in the first few months or years after menopause, so if you started HRT in perimenopause, but suspect you've entered menopause (there's no way to tell for sure until you stop taking the hormones), you may not need HRT for those symptoms anymore. It's worth discussing this with your practitioner. In addition, HRT is not recommended for women more than 10 years after menopause or after age 60,²⁵ as there is an increased risk for breast cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and osteoporosis.

If you've been on HRT for more than a year or two or are over 60, discuss tapering off with your trusted healthcare provider and consider all of the non-hormonal options presented in *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* as your passport to greater long-term symptom relief and overall health. Even if it hasn't been that long,

If you are currently on HRT but have never considered the natural options, you can always discuss tapering off with your trusted healthcare provider and explore some of the suggestions in this book. Do not be bullied into staying on it if your gut is telling you to explore other solutions!

MYTH: There's no hope for my symptoms once I am postmenopausal.

There is more than hope—there are *solutions*! But let me tell you that I hear you, I see you, and I understand your struggles. So many women have come to me distraught about their postmenopausal issues, feeling ignored, overlooked, and desperate for help for their very real symptoms. Help is here in these pages, along with an abundance of hope. I helped my mom navigate this journey and she is *thriving*. You can be right there with her, doing what you love and feeling your femininity like never before.

But first, a quick definition for clear understanding. To officially be postmenopausal, you need to have entered menopause and passed 12 months without a menstrual period. That's it. I realize the official definition of menopause creates confusion. Some women think their first hot flash puts them in menopause, while others have extended spotting and aren't sure where they fall. Please know that the experience is different for every woman, but the official definition of

²⁵ The North American Menopause Society (NAMS). "When I'm 64 -- I'll still have hot flashes?." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 2 March 2015. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/03/150302123347.htm>.

menopause deals with the cessation of your period. Once you have officially entered menopause, you remain in menopause for the rest of your life. Society has coined the term “postmenopause” to describe the time after the end of your period but there is no difference between the two terms. Postmenopause = Menopause.

Even after your period has vanished, you may still experience those same pesky symptoms from perimenopause. Hot flashes, vaginal dryness, stubborn weight gain, sleep issues, and more can still plague your day-to-day life if you don't have a strong foundation. If this is you, still desperate for symptom relief, please don't be dismayed or discouraged. The hope lies in addressing your specific root causes and making foundational lifestyle changes to reset your gut, liver, and stress. The 21-Day Hormone Makeover Program in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* will show you how while the symptom-specific advice in Part II will help you directly address the hormonal imbalances driving those nasties and help you to eradicate them from your life!

Essential Oils Menopause Solution Bonus Chapter: **Maintaining a Healthy Weight**

Deborah's Story

Deborah, age 55, reached out to me after her sister, Linda, experienced great results on the 21-Day Hormone Makeover Program (included in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*). Deborah shared with me over email that she felt like her metabolism had slowed down since she turned 50 and she wanted to know how she could see the same improvements her sister did in 21 days. Deborah shared more. "It's not just my weight. I am not feeling very active lately and my doctor says my blood glucose levels are higher than he would like. I know I need to move my body. I know I need to make some changes. It just feels like I'm too far in the other direction. Do you think I can really make progress? I mean, I see that my sister did. I just need to believe I can make changes at this age. I would also like to work on digestive issues. Can you help me?"

Deborah presented with insulin resistance, digestive distress, and poor diet and lifestyle habits.

My recommendations were as follows:

- *Six daily supplements: a multi-vitamin, 4000 IU Vitamin D, 400 mg of magnesium glycinate, methylated B vitamins, 250mg choline with inositol and 2,000 mg of omega-3 fatty acid to increase cellular energy and boost metabolic pathways.
- *The 21-Hormone Makeover meal plan to reset eating habits and support healthy blood sugar levels.
- *Increased hydration with water with lemon squeezed in the morning and afternoon to improve energy and gut motility.
- *For afternoon slumps incorporate energizing essential oils (like citrus oils or peppermint) every hour with breathwork and stretches to stop sugar cravings and boost energy.
- *Mindfully chewing food to help the digestive process more efficiently.
- *20-minute nature walks 4-5 times a week after work.

Deborah emailed me to share her progress with me after 30 days on the program. "You were right, I am making changes and my body is responding. I just had my labs checked and my fasting blood glucose levels are down and within normal range. I have lost 11.5 pounds so far and I am planning to stay on a meal plan for another two weeks at least. It's honestly easier than I expected, after I got through the first week. Honestly, there were a couple times when I thought I would quit, but my sister kept checking in on me each day and she told me I had to do it for my own good. Thank goodness for older sisters. She's just a year older, but that counts. My digestion has improved and I am not grabbing for snacks at all hours of the day. Giving up snacks was the hardest part, but I can see it has made a big difference."

What's Going On

You're eating the same and exercising as usual, but your favorite pair of jeans is getting uncomfortably snug. You've noticed weight pooling around your middle in a muffin top and have started opting for pants with elastic waist bands. Yoga pants, anyone? Your cravings, especially for sugar, are more intense and sometimes feel out of control—which isn't helping your attempts at eating more fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer packaged snack foods. No matter what you do, no matter how hard you try, and no matter how many calories you restrict or miles you run, you cannot move the needle on that stubborn belly fat. You're starting to feel hopeless. *Well, you might think, I am getting older. My metabolism just isn't what it used to be. Weight gain is inevitable, right?*

No, it's not. And don't let yourself fall into that trap of normalization. Knowledge is power, and once we understand what's happening in our bodies, we can make some lifestyle changes to adapt to this new reality.

Here's the truth: As we age, our bodies change, and some of these changes can make it easier to pack on the pounds and more difficult for us to get rid of them. Our metabolism slows by about 5 percent each decade after age 40, making it harder to burn off calories. And declining estrogen, associated with later perimenopause and menopause, triggers fat storage in our mid-section. It also leaves us less satisfied after a meal so that overeating is more likely.

But beyond natural age-related metabolism and estrogen decline, two of the biggest drivers of weight gain I see in middle-aged women on up are clearly lifestyle related:

1. Blood sugar regulation issues and insulin resistance severely slowing down our metabolism, and
2. Loss of muscle mass due to physical inactivity, causing us to be less efficient at burning blood sugar and calories.

All of this just means we have to make some changes to our lifestyle in order to better support our health. And you can do it! Eating to stabilize your blood sugar and improve insulin sensitivity and moving your body to build muscle will curb additional weight gain and help you lose stubborn belly fat.

Maintaining a healthy weight during perimenopause and menopause is absolutely possible and one of the best things you can do to support your hormonal health and lasting wellness. I probably don't have to tell you this, but I will since it's that important: weight gain, especially around the waist, puts you at higher risk for a host of serious health conditions including type 2

diabetes, dementia, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and osteoarthritis. There's also evidence of a link between obesity and certain cancers such as pancreatic, esophageal, colon, breast, and kidney cancer. And you may be more likely to experience anxiety and depression. Additional weight also contributes to the severity of perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms. One recent study showed overweight and obese women experience more severe hot flashes.²⁶ Contrary to popular belief, you are not doomed to carry around extra weight as you age. There's a lot we can do to help you maintain a healthy weight during the menopause transition and beyond.

Why It's Happening

We're quick to blame age on our struggles with weight gain during perimenopause and menopause. While age-related changes do factor into our new reality, they often aren't the main culprits. More than estrogen, it's usually insulin and cortisol creating havoc and contributing to the hormonal imbalances and root causes underlying our weight issues.

Hormone Imbalances

Ghrelin and Leptin, Your Digestive Hormones

In the digestive design, there are two intricately-balanced and dependent hormones that help your body to regulate fueling your body with food: ghrelin and leptin. Ghrelin regulates satiety, telling us how much to eat and aids in long-term energy metabolism. Leptin signals you when to stop eating, regulating appetite and the balance of energy, including when to tap into your adipose tissue (fat stores) for energy needs. When levels of leptin are low, the body shifts into starvation mode, thinking that food is scarce and encouraging us to eat as much as we can whenever food shows up. Hello, binge eating! The problem is that low levels of leptin also amp up the production of ghrelin, leaving us perpetually hungry. So, as long as leptin levels are stable, we'll be fine, right? This is where sugar causes major problems in your system, leading to dysregulated insulin levels and insulin resistance.

Dysregulated Insulin and Blood Sugar/Insulin Resistance

²⁶ Menopause: The Journal of The North American Menopause Society

Source Reference: Saccomani S et al "Does obesity increase the risk of hot flashes among midlife women? A population-based study" Menopause: The Journal of The North American Menopause Society 2017; DOI: 10.1097/GME.0000000000000884

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/endocrinology/menopause/65721>

We want our blood sugar to remain balanced without significant fluctuations or steady states that are too high or too low. Unfortunately, the typical diet high in processed high-carb foods and beverages disrupts the balance, leading to destructive spikes and crashes and ultimately high blood sugar and high insulin. Consumption of excess amounts of sugar impacts the body's production of leptin, causing this important metabolic hormone to stall, forcing our cells into starvation mode. When this happens, ghrelin production increases, causing perpetual hunger. We see food, and we binge, and all of that extra fat gets stored around our midsection because the body doesn't know when the next meal will come! Tapping into adipose tissue for energy is our starvation mode design, and so is piling on extra fat when food seems scarce. It is a crazy cycle of fat storage and weight gain perpetuated by chronic stress. Once this pattern escalates, our body simply cannot take the extra stress and we start to have issues with insulin and blood sugar.

Here's how it happens. The carbohydrates that we eat are turned into glucose, or blood sugar. High blood sugar triggers the release of the hormone insulin to transport glucose from the bloodstream into cells where it is used for energy. If we're eating too many carbohydrates and have more glucose than our cells need, it's converted to glycogen and stored as fat in our liver for future use. When the liver can't store any more glycogen, it will turn excess sugar into body fat. Over time, if our blood sugar remains high, and therefore our insulin levels do too, our cells grow resistant to insulin and no longer accept glucose. This is a condition called insulin resistance.

Now, glucose can't get into cells, but it has to go somewhere. You guessed it: body fat. Fat storage is in high gear, and your body is desperately holding on to it as fuel for when it fears it won't be fed regularly. But, when there's tons of glucose in your bloodstream, the body thinks cells have enough to draw on; there's no need to use up fat stores to supply the cells. Meanwhile, your cells are actually starving—and you feel fatigued and crave more carbs! Instead of burning fat, you're losing muscle as your body breaks it down for fuel, and less muscle means even more weight gain and poor weight control. You're gaining weight and no amount of dieting will help until you improve the insulin sensitivity of cells and get them to start accepting glucose again.

Low Estrogen

Declining estrogen levels in the late stage of perimenopause and menopause make it tough for our hypothalamus to properly regulate food intake. We don't feel as full or satisfied after a meal and that can mean eating more than we should. Low estrogen can also impair the function of leptin, the hormone that tells us when to stop eating. Lower estrogen is the reason we notice fat shifting from our hips and thighs to the belly.

Root Causes

Stress

We tend to lose our appetite in moments of acute stress, but when stress becomes chronic, our hunger may increase, especially for fat- and sugar-laden comfort foods such as cake, potato chips, and ice cream. My favorite time of the day to stress eat was between 3 pm and 4 pm each day, but for many people it's after dinner. Cortisol, the stress hormone, urges the body to replenish its energy stores by stimulating your appetite *and* tells it to store belly fat. High levels of cortisol can make overeating a habit and increase your risk of abdominal obesity, one of the most dangerous kinds. Cortisol also raises blood sugar levels and thus insulin, contributing to blood sugar and insulin dysregulation and insulin resistance, all resulting in more stubborn extra pounds, especially around your middle.

Additionally, studies have shown that our metabolism slows under stress in favor of survival instincts. In one, female participants who reported one or more stressors during the previous 24 hours burned 104 fewer calories than non-stressed women, adding up to almost 11 extra pounds per year. And, they had higher levels of insulin.²⁷

Stress isn't helping you burn calories. It's a major reason you may be dieting and trying and doing all the right things only to look down and still see that ring around your waistline. Regulating cortisol alone can allow the body shed extra pounds that it's been hanging onto for the sake of survival. It also improves mental clarity, your ability to get good sleep, and most other perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms. Stabilizing cortisol by managing stress and prioritizing self-care is essential for maintaining a healthy weight. One of the best ways? Exercise. It helps lower stress and, when it includes regular strength-training, helps to build muscle mass and improve your basal metabolic rate, the amount of energy your body needs to keep working when you're at rest.

Sluggish Liver

Your liver keeps excess glucose stored away as glycogen. But it can only store so much. Once glycogen stores are full, the liver transforms the excess glucose into body fat to be stored in fat cells throughout the body, particularly your belly. When too many of these fat cells accumulate inside the liver (and excess alcohol is not involved), you develop a condition called fatty liver disease, or non-alcoholic fatty liver (NAFL). These fattened cells don't just impair liver function, slow metabolism, and inhibit weight loss, they can also lead to inflammation, damage, and even

²⁷ Kiecolt-Glaser, Janice K et al. "Daily stressors, past depression, and metabolic responses to high-fat meals: a novel path to obesity." *Biological psychiatry* vol. 77,7 (2015): 653-60. doi:10.1016/j.biopsych.2014.05.018

death to surrounding liver tissue. This is a more serious liver condition known as non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, or NASH.

As many as 20% of American adults have some degree of fatty liver disease, a condition that used to occur almost exclusively in people who drink alcohol excessively. The increase is linked to the rise in insulin resistance and disorders characterized by it such as obesity and diabetes. Between 70% and 90% of people with those conditions also have fatty liver disease.²⁸

Fatty liver is reversible in its early stages, so now is the time to adapt your diet. Eating a diet low in refined carbs and processed sugars has been shown to help.

Metabolic Syndrome

Metabolic syndrome is an umbrella term for several conditions that tend to occur together and increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes: high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels. It's estimated that up to one third of U.S. adults have it and the risk increases with age. Women in menopause are 60% more likely to develop it.²⁹

This constellation of conditions is linked with insulin resistance, obesity (especially a large waist circumference), and inactivity. Your risk of metabolic syndrome rises if you've ever had nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. To prevent serious health problems and support a healthy weight, it's critical to make lifestyle changes to lower your risk factors for metabolic syndrome, such as getting blood sugar and insulin under control, improving insulin sensitivity, and moving more.

Low Thyroid Function

Weight gain is one of the most recognized symptoms of hypothyroidism, or low thyroid function. Weight gain was the first indication that my thyroid was not fully functioning, as I carried around an extra 35 pounds that wouldn't budge. My metabolism had tanked and I knew that I needed to find out why. Unexplained weight gain is often what compels people to the doctor for some answers and a diagnosis. It certainly did for me! Your thyroid controls your metabolism so when it slows down so does your ability to efficiently use energy. Your heart, respiration, and digestive rate all slow, leading to weight gain. The body is also holding on to calories and storing them as fat, adding to the challenge of burning them off. The weight will come off more easily once your thyroid issue is addressed.

²⁸ <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/liver-disease/nafl-d-nash/definition-facts>

²⁹ Park YW, Zhu S, Palaniappan L, et al. 2003 The metabolic syndrome: prevalence and associated risk factor findings in the US population from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1988–1994. Arch Intern Med 163:427–436.

What You Can Do to Maintain a Healthy Weight

There's a lot at play when it comes to weight issues. We each have our own unique history, hormones, and emotional chemistry. We each have our own unique challenges. But if we can get our insulin and blood sugar stable, reduce stress, and support our liver, we'll provide the right environment for our bodies to maintain a healthy weight.

The following essential oil blends, supplements, herbs, and self-care rituals are specifically designed to do just that, helping you to combat food cravings, promote a healthy metabolism, and show your body the attention it deserves. Use these in concert with the Hormone Makeover Program in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* to support your weight goals by transforming the way your body functions at the cellular level. I designed the Hormone Makeover Program to address stubborn weight gain due to hormonal imbalances, and it is the exact program that I used to support my metabolism and thyroid function. Best of all, I have taken all the guesswork out for you. The Hormone Makeover Program is easy to follow and results-driven.

Heather: Stress eating almost got the best of me

"I couldn't stop stress eating. No matter how many diets I did, I just put the weight back on, plus a couple more pounds. I didn't know how to stop. Eating filled a void that I didn't know how to address. My job as an executive assistant was non-stop. My phone never stopped buzzing demands. My hair was getting thinner and I always felt exhausted. Finally, I said enough is enough and I started looking for a new executive assistant job and I started with a 5-minute meditation and breathwork in my car to and from work. I also added in some oils and anytime I started to reach for a snack, I would grab an oil instead. Overtime, I added more habits to focus on me. I knew I needed to treat my stress in order to address my overeating. It was hard, but I finally focused on myself for a change."

How to Maintain a Healthy Weight With Essential Oils

Many essential oils have been researched and utilized to support the body's natural processes in sustaining a healthy weight and metabolism. Not only do they help to rejuvenate and support your bodily systems, but they can also help to curb current cravings as your body adjusts to a healthier lifestyle. Peppermint in particular has been proven extremely effective in this arena. A study done by Dr. Alan Hirsch found Peppermint has an amazing ability to not only combat cravings but boost your senses to give your body the ability to refocus its energy. I recommend

utilizing the power of Peppermint in combination with the other oils on this list to find your perfect combination!

Top 5 Essential Oils for Maintaining a Healthy Weight

#1 - PEPPERMINT (*Mentha piperita*)

Proven to reduce cravings while restoring focus, Peppermint is my go-to essential oil for supporting healthy digestion while suppressing appetite. Able to decrease digestive distress such as gas and bloating, Peppermint enlivens the spirit and hones your focus and alertness. Try it combined with Wild Orange for energy or Bergamot for uplift and calm.

HOW TO USE

Aromatically

- **Diffuse** - Add 2 drops to your diffuser with 2 drops Grapefruit for sustained mood support and appetite stabilization.
- **Inhale** - Breathe deeply from the bottle when a sugar craving strikes.

Topically

- **Pulse Points** - Dilute 1-2 drops with a carrier oil and apply to pulse points.

#2 - CASSIA (*Cinnamomum cassia*)

A warm and spicy member of the cinnamon family, Cassia's warm aroma will become your new favorite to help stabilize your blood sugar levels while promoting satiety. This means your brain will get the message that your stomach is full before you accidentally binge eat due to stress. Great for immune support, Cassia also supports your digestive system while adding a delightfully rich flavor to your foods and drinks. Be aware that Cassia is a warm oil, so go easy with topical application and direct inhalation. I recommend combining it with other oils for synergy and optimal effectiveness.

HOW TO USE

Aromatically

- **Diffuse** - Add 3-4 drops to your diffuser with Citrus oils to ward off cravings and sustain mood.

Topically

- **Massage** - Add 2 drops to 1 teaspoon carrier oil and massage into skin, feeling the warming sensation release areas of tension.

#3 - FENNEL (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

With its smooth, sweet licorice flavor, Fennel delights the palate while supporting your body's metabolism and blood sugar levels. Able to nix those sugar cravings, Fennel supports your body's digestive system while simultaneously aiding the respiratory system. If your digestive system is disagreeable in the evening, reach for the Fennel to calm down an upset stomach.

HOW TO USE

Aromatically

- **Diffuse** - Add 3-4 drops to your diffuser to support your systems and hone focus.

Topically

- **Massage** - Dilute 1-2 drops in 1 teaspoon carrier oil and gently massage into your stomach and small intestines to support digestion.

#4 - GINGER (*Zingiber officinale*)

Not only good for a troubled tummy, Ginger helps to minimize cravings and binging by suppressing your cortisol levels. In addition, it has been shown to reduce internal inflammation allowing for better absorption of necessary vitamins and minerals. Prized for years for its ability to reduce gas and bloating, Ginger stands the test of time for digestive support.

HOW TO USE

Aromatically

- **Diffuse** - Add 3-4 drops to your diffuser to curb cravings and support emotional balance; add Citrus oils and Ylang Ylang to boost your energy as well.
- **Inhale** - Breathe deeply from the bottle when afternoon cravings threaten an unhealthy snack attack, or add 1 drop to your palms, rub together, cup over your mouth and nose, and inhale deeply for intense craving support.

Topically

- **Massage** - Dilute 1-2 drops in 1 teaspoon carrier oil and massage over the lower abdomen to support natural digestive processes.

#5 - GRAPEFRUIT (*Citrus X paradisi*)

Citrus oils are notoriously powerful detox agents, but Grapefruit also minimizes sugar cravings and the urge to binge. It has also been shown to attack excess fat deposits and suppress your

appetite in support of a healthy metabolism. By minimizing water retention, Grapefruit is a great way to detox your body from the inside out.

HOW TO USE

Aromatically

- **Diffuse** -Add 3-4 drops to your diffuser to increase motivation when restyling your diet; add Peppermint for instant focus.

Topically

- **Massage** - Dilute 1-2 drops in 1 teaspoon carrier oil and massage into areas with excess fat deposits for direct support.
- **Scrub** - Add 5 drops to 1 tablespoon of sugar for a scrub that exfoliates and supports your body.

Essential Oil Blends

DIFFUSER BLENDS

Cravings Crusher Diffuser Blend

- 2 drops Cassia essential oil
- 2 drops Grapefruit essential oil
- 1 drop Peppermint essential oil
- 1 drop Ginger essential oil

Metabolic Support Diffuser Blend

- 2 drops Cassia essential oil
- 2 drops Ginger essential oil
- 2 drops Grapefruit essential oil

Focus and Support Diffuser Blend

- 3 drops Grapefruit essential oil
- 2 drops Peppermint essential oil
- 1 drop Rosemary essential oil

PERSONAL INHALER BLENDS

Cravings Crusher Inhaler Blend

- 5 drops Cassia or Cinnamon essential oil

- 5 drops Peppermint essential oil
- 5 drops Lemon essential oil

Sugar Basher Inhaler Blend

- 5 drops Lavender essential oil
- 5 drops Grapefruit essential oil
- 3 drops Fennel essential oil

ROLLERBALL BLENDS

Nix Cravings Rollerball Blend

- 6 drops Grapefruit essential oil
- 6 drops Peppermint essential oil
- 5 drops Tangerine essential oil
- 3 drops Ginger essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and top off with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll on pulse points and deeply inhale to reduce and prevent cravings.

Tummy Calming Rollerball Blend

- 8 drops Ginger essential oil
- 8 drops Peppermint essential oil
- 3 drops Fennel essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and top off with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll on your abdomen to ease stomach discomfort and/or support healthy digestion. You can also apply to wrists and inhale when needed to curb cravings.

Morning Energizer Rollerball Blend

- 10 drops Grapefruit or Wild Orange essential oil
- 10 drops Peppermint essential oil
- 5 drops Frankincense essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and top off with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll on pulse points and inhale deeply. Toss in your purse for on-the-go focus and cravings prevention throughout the day.

Supplements and Herbs to Maintain a Healthy Weight

A strong metabolism is essential for maintaining a healthy weight. These supplements and herbs are some of my favorites to support your metabolism and healthy blood sugar balance while keeping cravings and fat storage in check.

Supplements

B Complex Vitamins

B vitamins are absolutely a non-negotiable when it comes to supporting your metabolism. Each vitamin in the complex plays a unique role in helping your body break down the foods you eat and convert them into energy. Supplementing with an activated B complex vitamin is an easy way to give your body and metabolism a boost!

When it comes to choosing a B vitamin supplement, you want to make sure you are selecting an activated (or methylated) B complex vitamin. That way, your body will be able to absorb them and put them to use immediately! Essentially Whole® Activated B Complete is a great option because it contains the ideal balance of B vitamins in a methylated form.

Vitamin D (4,000-5,000 IU/day)

People who do not have enough vitamin D (which, unfortunately, is most of us) may struggle to lose weight. Vitamin D can prevent your body from storing excess fat while also prompting your metabolism into action to keep new fat cells from forming.³⁰ Vitamin D also has a profound impact on your serotonin levels, which governs everything from mood and sleep to how hungry or satisfied you feel after you eat.³¹ While the best way to get vitamin D is through direct sun exposure (approximately 20 minutes/day of direct sun without sunscreen can give you what you need), that is not always practical. A vitamin D3 supplement (like my Essentially Whole® Vitamin D Complete) is a simple way to increase your body's ability to shed weight!

Iron (30-100mg/day)

³⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26899162>

³¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22249823>

When you have a healthy balance of iron, your muscles and tissues get enough oxygen for them to work efficiently. This allows them to burn more calories and makes it easier for you to lose weight.³²

Magnesium Glycinate (400-600mg/day)

Magnesium helps maintain healthy blood sugar and insulin levels so you don't experience the spikes and dips that lead to bingeing and excess snacking. It also helps minimize bloating and how much water your body retains, which can help knock off some of that initial weight that is holding you back from success.

There are lots of different types of magnesium, but they are *not* all the same. I recommend Essentially Whole® Magnesium Restore because this chelated form of magnesium is bioavailable and easily put to use by your body without causing gastrointestinal discomforts.

Chromium (100-400mcg/day) ***and Berberine*** (900-2,000mg/day)

Chromium and Berberine supplements have both been found to significantly improve your insulin sensitivity to help you keep your blood sugar balanced.³³ Beyond improving your insulin resistant state, they help reduce inflammation and regulate the level of glucose that is circulating in your bloodstream to help you achieve your weight loss goals.³⁴

Probiotics

When your microbiome is imbalanced, your body's balance is going to suffer. Probiotics are essential to help you cut inflammation, increase feelings of satiety after you eat, keep your blood sugar stable, and even reduce how much fat your body stores.³⁵

The ideal way to support your gut is through the foods you eat. Some options are:

- Fermented vegetables (sauerkraut, kimchi, fermented pickles, etc.)
- Coconut Kefir
- Kombucha
- Miso

If you buy these foods from the store, be extra cautious reading labels to ensure they are truly fermented and not packed with sugar, extra flavorings, or other ingredients you want to avoid. The best way to ensure the purity of your fermented foods is to make them yourself, and I promise it's not as hard as you may think! My dear friend Summer Bock is a fermentation

³² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24770833>

³³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15208835>

³⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6434235/>

³⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1756464612001399>

expert who offers many resources to help you get started with your own fermentations. You can check her out here: <https://summerbock.com>.

Another way to get a high dose of probiotics simply is through a supplement. Probiotic supplements typically contain a large variety of bacteria strains and can be particularly helpful if your microbiome has been wiped out by sickness, antibiotics, or if you are just beginning the process of building it up. Some probiotic manufacturers I trust are MegaSporeBiotic and Custom Probiotic.

Fiber (30g/day)

You need to be getting approximately 30g of fiber each and every day to keep your body functioning optimally. Unfortunately, many of us don't even reach the halfway point to that number. Getting enough fiber helps keep you regular, clean out the toxins that accumulate in your gut, and plays a crucial role in feeding your microbiome to ensure it stays in a healthy balance.³⁶ It can also help you feel full longer so you don't face untimely cravings or hunger that drive you to excessive snacking and derail your progress.

The best food sources of fiber are fruits and vegetables, so upping your intake of greens and low-glycemic index fruits is a good place to start. Working a dietary fiber supplement into smoothies that you are already making is an effortless way to make sure you're getting what you need! Essentially Whole Daily Fiber Complete is my preferred fiber because it won't cause the bloating and gas that so often accompanies fiber powders.

Herbs

Matcha

The constituents in matcha help boost your metabolism and can even block fat cells from forming in your body. It also controls your stress response, a driver of weight gain. It is a great substitute when cutting out caffeine and gives your body a strong antioxidant boost in the morning. Try my Matcha Latte (page TK), add a scoop to your smoothie, or check out my book *The Matcha Miracle* for more ideas.

Peppermint Tea

Peppermint is one of the most powerful cravings-busting herbs I have found. When I am in a chocolate stare-down, one whiff of my peppermint essential oil is usually enough to nix that craving before I can give in! Peppermint tea is another great way to get a naturally sweet,

³⁶ [https://www.cell.com/cell-host-microbe/fulltext/S1931-3128\(17\)30497-3](https://www.cell.com/cell-host-microbe/fulltext/S1931-3128(17)30497-3)

refreshing boost to help keep you away from troublesome foods while also promoting healthy digestion and supporting your body's metabolism.

Cinnamon (1-6g/day)

Cinnamon is a great metabolism-booster and antioxidant that can also help balance your blood sugar to help relieve your insulin resistance.³⁷ It also decreases inflammation and keeps your cholesterol in check. Adding some cinnamon to your tea, coffee, smoothies, or other recipes is a simple way to give your body a health boost!

Dr. Mariza's Hormone Loving Rituals and Protocols

Inhale Peppermint and Grapefruit

Want to know the easiest, simplest, most aromatically uplifting way to prevent cravings and rock your day more focused and with more energy? Diffusing Peppermint and Grapefruit, or just breathing them right out of the bottle! I use this combination first thing in the morning to supercharge my day! Research has proven that just the aromatherapeutic support of one inhale can curb cravings instantly, but using this combination throughout the day can help to prevent snack binges and support your healthy metabolism. Give yourself an extra energy boost in your day by leveraging this awesome combo!

Warm Lemon Mornings

Sipping a mug of warm lemon water in the morning can be key to supporting healthy metabolic and digestive function. Hydrating first thing in the morning with water spiked with a healthy dose of vitamin c-packed citrus can boost your antioxidant support. This protects your body from free radicals and can also support digestion and liver. In addition, the acidic levels of lemon can help your natural detox and support your kidney's health. Research has shown that polyphenol content in lemons could also help to sustain your body's healthy weight and support normal blood glucose levels, preventing insulin resistance.

To make lemon water, simply add the juice of one whole organic lemon to 8 ounces of warm (not hot) water. I drink lemon water with a metal straw to prevent tooth enamel loss and wait an hour before brushing my teeth. If you find that you start having heartburn after beginning this morning routine, cut back on the quantity of lemon juice, or you may need to stop completely until you can balance your internal pH.

³⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21538147>

Note: Some people find that lemon juice actually helps their heartburn, however, because their body isn't producing enough stomach acid. As with everything else I suggest, remember that you are an individual with unique body chemistry. See what works for you and keep track of the results!

Mindful Eating

There is an art to mindful eating, one that centers on savoring each delicious bite to appreciate the subtlety of flavors. Food is fuel to your body, especially when you nourish it with nutrient-dense, flavor-rich nourishment that feeds your mind and soul. Using smaller-sized plates enables your eyes to appreciate the beauty of the food created by nature while allowing for graceful portion control. Counting those chews (aim for 30-40) honors your body by promoting easier digestion. Plus, your key metabolic hormones, ghrelin and leptin, function better, receiving and sending proper hunger signals, when you slow down. Take the time to enjoy each bite: the aromas, the mindfulness of cooking, the beauty of your delicious meal.

Hydration Ritual

Experiencing a craving out of nowhere? It could be that you are dehydrated. Oftentimes our bodies are craving more water to function. Aim for half your body weight in ounces of water each day, adjusting as needed. And remember that your body often mistakes thirst for hunger, so try drinking a few sips when you feel that snack attack creeping up on you. Don't like the taste of water? Add some herbs and fresh fruit into your water to flavor it up. Check out some of my favorite water infusions in *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*.

Green Smoothie Ritual

Green smoothies provide a nutrient-packed breakfast and aid your body in feeling full. I love that you can tune into your body, listen to what it needs, and throw that combination of flavors right in a smoothie. I recommend using a green smoothie either for breakfast in the morning or for lunch as a full meal replacement. Its combination of protein, fiber, and healthy fats that provides your body the love that it needs from the inside out without disrupting your progress!

Balanced Plates

What is on your plate greatly impacts your metabolic resilience. To maintain a healthy weight that honors your body, know that you need a certain amount of fat, protein, and fiber in each and every meal—the perfect plate trifecta. If you don't properly fuel your body, you will find it difficult to achieve the other goals that you have set for yourself. Balancing your plate can become an easy and fun ritual to ensure that you love yourself from the inside out. It also helps to stabilize blood sugar and satiety, helping your body to create balanced blood sugar levels with each meal.

In Conclusion...

Your struggle with your weight through perimenopause and menopause can feel like a never-ending fight. But you are not in this alone! These tips, supplements and rituals will give your body exactly what it needs to continue to thrive for decades to come. Check out *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* for even more tips to help your body stay healthy and energized!

Essential Oils Menopause Solution Bonus Chapter: **Breast, Bone, and Heart Health Support**

Angie's Story

Angie, age 58, reached out to me after finding one of my books. Andrea had been diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and fatty liver issues. She was showing signs of metabolic syndrome and was looking for a reset to reduce her heart risk and abdominal fat. She also explained that she felt really burned out and tired and would love to feel more energized. “Dr. Mariza, after reading your DASH diet book, I thought I would reach out because I think this is also related to my hormones and I know you do hormones too. I love my life and I’m active in my community, but recently I have felt slower and I want to get my energy back. I am willing to do what it takes, especially after seeing my labs. After reading your books, I am convinced I can reverse some of this.”

Angie presented with insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, hypertension, and poor diet and lifestyle habits.

My recommendation were as follows:

- *Eight daily supplements: a multi-vitamin, 4000 IU Vitamin D, 200mg Curcumin, 50mg Coenzyme Q10, 400 mg of magnesium glycinate, methylated B vitamins, 1200mg berberine, and 2,000 mg of omega-3 fatty acid to increase cellular energy, support liver function, and boost metabolic pathways.

- *The 21-Day Hormone Makeover meal plan(found in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*) to reset eating habits and support healthy blood sugar levels.

- *Add a breakfast and lunch green smoothie with 1-2 scoops of fiber (5-10 grams).

- *Increased hydration with water with lemon squeezed in the morning and afternoon to improve energy and gut motility.

- *For afternoon slumps incorporate energizing essential oils every hour with breathwork and stretches to boost energy and crush cravings.

- *30-minute nature walks 2-3 times a week and strength training 2 times a week.

Five weeks later Angie reached out to me to give me an update. She sounded happier and more energetic since the last time we talked. “So, I’ve been working your program and let me tell you, it’s actually working for me. Now, I haven’t had my labs yet, not until next week, but I have a feeling my doctor is going to be pleasantly surprised. I am on the supplements and I know that they are designed to reduce my inflammation and give me more energy. I think they are

working, but it has been the major food eliminations that have made the difference. I mean, you took away *all* of my favorite foods and it was really hard to give them up. I had some big time food addictions and I didn't know it until the first week of the program. Let's just say I wasn't my best self. But I pushed through it and I am happy to report I lost 9 pounds in the first 21 days and I have lost another 4 pounds so far. I know for a fact that I need more improvement, so I am staying on the meal plan and sticking with my two green smoothies for breakfast and dinner. The oils have helped my cravings and have given me that extra energy boost to do the things I love."

YOUR BREASTS

What's Going On

Breast cancer is one of the biggest fears that middle-aged women share with me. I understand. The thought of any cancer scares me, too! The most important thing is not to let fear get in the way of good breast health, which means paying attention to how your breasts feel and are perhaps changing during perimenopause and menopause. Our risk does increase with age, with about 95% of women diagnosed each year over the age of 40, and about half over the age 61.³⁸ But let me be clear: age is the risk factor here, not menopause.

Menopause itself does not increase your breast cancer risk. While it is second only to lung cancer in deaths of women over 40, the reality is that most of us will not be diagnosed with breast cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, there is a 1 in 8 chance an American woman will develop breast cancer—and a 7 in 8 chance she will not.³⁹ And women who are diagnosed with breast cancer now have a better outlook than ever before. Many of these changes are absolutely normal and not cancer, but only by recognizing what's happening in your body will you be able to notice any new or unusual symptoms and tell your trusted healthcare provider about them.

These are some of the most common differences you may notice in your breasts:

- **Soreness.** During perimenopause, as your periods become more erratic and estrogen and progesterone levels fluctuate, you may experience unpredictable tenderness. Breast pain should go away after you stop having periods, but menopausal women on hormone therapy increase their risk for continued breast pain.
- **Less fullness and sagging.** As we near menopause and our milk system shuts down, the glandular tissue in our breasts shrink.

³⁸ American Cancer Society. Breast Cancer Facts and Figures 2019-2020. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2019.

³⁹ <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/about/how-common-is-breast-cancer.html>

- **Lumpy breasts.** In perimenopause, fluctuating levels of estrogen and estrogen dominance may contribute to non-cancerous lumpy breast tissue, referred to as fibrocystic breast changes. These changes are common, affecting an estimated 50 percent of women ages 20 to 50. They may also be due to fibrosis, rubbery or firm fibrous tissue, or cysts, fluid-filled sacs.⁴⁰ You may feel these lumps all the time or just prior to the start of your period, and they tend to resolve in menopause. Neither fibrosis nor simple cysts increase your risk of later developing breast cancer.

It's always a good idea to bring changes to the attention of your trusted healthcare provider, but please don't leap to the worst case scenario right away. Remember, most midlife breast changes are not cancer.

Risk Factors for Breast Cancer

Ones you can't change:

- Age, growing older
- First menses before age 12 and menopause after age 55
- An immediate family member (mother, sister, or daughter) with breast cancer
- Genetic mutations, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2
- Previous radiation therapy to the chest or breasts

Ones you can:

- Inactive lifestyle
- Weight
- Drinking alcohol
- Taking certain forms of hormone therapy and birth control pills

Why It's Happening

Estrogen. Fluctuating estrogen levels and estrogen dominance contribute to breast tenderness and other breast tissue changes during perimenopause. Estrogen causes the breast ducts to enlarge, which can make your breasts feel sore especially during your period when estrogen levels run high. Estrogen fuels most breast cancers and your cumulative exposure to estrogen is what factors into your risk for breast cancer. A pooled analysis of data from seven studies of perimenopausal women found higher blood estrogen levels increased breast cancer risk and

⁴⁰ <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/4185-fibrocystic-breast-changes>

higher amounts of estrogen are linked to an increased risk of breast cancer in women after menopause.^{41 42} Estrogen stimulates breast tissue, so the longer your breasts are exposed to estrogen, the higher your risk. That's why women with a late menopause, after age 55, have a higher risk, as do women who started their periods early, before age 12, and go through a late menopause.

Extra body fat. Fat cells make estrogen. The more fat we have, the more estrogen is produced. This is why being overweight or obese is a risk factor for breast cancer. Studies show that women who are overweight or obese after menopause have a 20 to 60 percent higher breast cancer risk than those who are lean.⁴³ Also, women who are overweight tend to struggle with dysregulated blood sugar and insulin resistance. Higher insulin levels have been linked to some cancers, including breast cancer.

Poor diet. Some researchers have suggested that dietary factors could be responsible for 30 to 35% of all cancers.⁴⁴ Eating a whole-foods anti-inflammatory diet that keeps your blood sugar stable is one of the best ways to lower your risk. And getting enough fiber is key, since it supports your digestive system in the elimination of excess estrogen. Several studies suggest that dietary fiber can help protect against breast cancer. An organic plant-based diet high in antioxidants lowered the risk of developing breast cancer by 15 percent.⁴⁵

Lack of physical exercise. Dozens of studies have consistently made the connection between regular exercise and a lower breast cancer risk. It helps maintain a healthy weight, reduce fat stores, and regulate insulin.

Hormone Therapy (HT)

Hormone therapy is often presented as a way to prevent breast cancer, osteoporosis, and heart disease, and, in certain circumstances, there may be some benefit. But those benefits come

⁴¹ Endogenous Hormones and Breast Cancer Collaborative Group. Sex hormones and risk of breast cancer in premenopausal women: a collaborative reanalysis of individual participant data from seven prospective studies. *Lancet Oncol.* 14(10):1009-19, 2013.

⁴² Key TJ, Appleby PN, Reeves GK, et al. for the Endogenous Hormones and Breast Cancer Collaborative Group. Circulating sex hormones and breast cancer risk factors in postmenopausal women: reanalysis of 13 studies. *Br J Cancer.* 105(5):709-22, 2011.

⁴³ Neuhauser, Marian L et al. "Overweight, Obesity, and Postmenopausal Invasive Breast Cancer Risk: A Secondary Analysis of the Women's Health Initiative Randomized Clinical Trials." *JAMA oncology* vol. 1,5 (2015): 611-21. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2015.1546

⁴⁴ Anand, Preetha et al. "Cancer is a preventable disease that requires major lifestyle changes." *Pharmaceutical research* vol. 25,9 (2008): 2097-116. doi:10.1007/s11095-008-9661-9

⁴⁵ Link, Lilli B et al. "Dietary patterns and breast cancer risk in the California Teachers Study cohort." *The American journal of clinical nutrition* vol. 98,6 (2013): 1524-32. doi:10.3945/ajcn.113.061184

with a host of potential side effects, some very serious. I want you to know that in most cases you do not need to be on HT. It is not required for good health, including to have healthy breasts, bones, and heart. The only reason you should be on HT is after you and your trusted healthcare provider have discussed all of your symptoms, weighed all of your options, and considered your risk factors and personal preferences, and then determined it is right for you. Remember, it is *your* decision. You are the CEO of your own healthcare.

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What You Can Do to Support Breast Health

Lifestyle plays a major role in maintaining breast health and lowering your risk of breast cancer. The Hormone Makeover Program in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* provides you with a complete protocol for developing a strong foundation of healthy lifestyle habits to support healthy breast tissue. Do the Makeover and use the following essential oil blends, supplements, herbs, and self-care rituals to support you.

If you are interested in going deeper, check out my dear friend, Dr. Veronique Desaulniers. Dr. Veronique has helped thousands of women prevent and recover from breast cancer. She is my go-to expert for the most up-to-date research and integrates with alternative options (<https://breastcancerconqueror.com/>)

Talk to your trusted healthcare provider about your screening options since guidelines vary and change and if genetic testing is warranted for you. Traditional mammograms are not your only option. Another safe and effective screening option is thermography.

Thermography is also known as “Digital Infrared Thermographic Imaging” or DITI. It is designed to read the “infrared heat” that is emitted from the body. DITI can potentially detect unhealthy cells years before a lump may be detected on a mammogram. Research going back to the 1980’s has proven that thermography works, and I consider thermography to be one of the best and most effective early screening tools for breast cancer. Why? Because thermography can often detect inflammatory anomalies and physiological changes in the breast area years before other methods can.

I encourage you to support the findings of a thermogram or mammogram with an ultrasound. Ultrasound can give you a visual representation of any changes in your breast tissue. No one screening tool is 100% accurate, so getting several images of your breast tissue ensures that you have the best overview of any changes in your breast tissue.

How to Support Breast Health with Essential Oils

While most essential oil research until this point has only been supportive of symptoms, we know that foundational support can help to prepare your body for the future, especially if you are genetically predisposed for more serious issues. That said, research continues to grow concerning the use of essential oils to promote cellular vitality and strength. With this knowledge and the experience I have as an essential oil expert, I have recommended the following essential oils in synergistic rollerball blends to support breast health before issues develop and when problems arise.

TOP FIVE ESSENTIAL OILS TO SUPPORT BREAST HEALTH

1. Thyme
2. Roman Chamomile
3. Rose
4. Tangerine
5. Frankincense

Essential Oil Blends

Breast Friend Rollerball Blend

- 6 drops Frankincense essential oil
- 5 drops Lavender essential oil
- 5 drops Tangerine essential oil
- 4 drops Thyme or Marjoram essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and fill the rest of the way with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll on each breast to support overall health or focus on areas of concern.

Breast Health Rollerball Blend

- 10 drops Thyme essential oil
- 8 drops Roman Chamomile essential oil
- 8 drops Frankincense essential oil
- 5 drops Rose or Jasmine essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and fill the rest of the way with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll on each breast to support overall health or focus on areas of concern.

Breast-Supporting Supplements and Herbs

Here are some natural supplements and herbal recommendations to set your body up for the best breast health.

Supplements

Vitamin D (1000- 5000 IU/day)

Being deficient in vitamin D significantly increases your risk of developing breast cancer. It is an essential vitamin for healthy cell growth that may also ward off cancer cells.⁴⁶ Since most of us are deficient in this “sunshine” vitamin due to being indoors and wearing sunscreen all the time, supplementing with D3 is an easy way to increase the levels of vitamin D in your body. You can also get enough vitamin D by being outdoors, in direct sunlight without sunscreen, for about 20 minutes each day. But since that isn’t always practical, vitamin D3 is a good alternative!

Co-Q10 (50-100mg/day)

There is promising research that Co-Q10, a naturally-occurring antioxidant that your body uses to grow and maintain healthy cells, can be a clinically significant factor in eliminating breast cancer by causing tumors to shrink or even disappear altogether.⁴⁷ This is most powerful when you combine it with vitamin C (or other antioxidants) and fatty acids.

Omega-3s (1000-3000mg/day)

Having enough fatty acids (especially omega-3s) can help slow the progression of breast cancer cells and even prevent them from growing in the first place.⁴⁸ They do this by reducing inflammation, promoting a healthy immune response, and keeping healthy signalling pathways between all of your cells.

Iodine (2 to 12.5 mg/day)

Iodine plays an essential role in maintaining healthy breast cells, and many of us aren’t getting enough through diet alone. Being deficient in iodine puts you at a higher risk of developing

⁴⁶ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0199265>

⁴⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7908519>

⁴⁸ <https://breast-cancer-research.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13058-015-0571-6>

fibrocystic breast diseases, as well as cancer.⁴⁹ Supplementing with iodine can help promote your breast health by reducing your cells' sensitivity to the excess estrogen that often leads to breast cancer.⁵⁰

Herbs

Curcumin (200-500mg, twice/day)

A compound found in turmeric, the potent yellow spice that found in many Indian dishes, Curcumin has powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that benefit each system in your body. Specifically, it has been found to have anti-tumor effects on breast cells to keep you free of cancer.⁵¹

Ginger (1-3g/day)

Several constituents in Ginger have shown promise as a way to reduce breast cancer growth while promoting the health of regular breast cells.^{52,53} Working enough ginger into your diet to make a significant difference is a challenge, so you can investigate supplements to give you the power of ginger in an easily absorbable form. Just be sure to choose one without artificial additives or ingredients you don't recognize!

Matcha Green Tea

Matcha is a more powerful drink than green tea alone because it utilizes the whole tea leaf to offer more nutrients and compounds that can enable your body to thrive.

Matcha contains epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), which is a compound that prevents cancer cells from taking in the glucose that fuels them. EGCG has even been found to cause breast cancer cells to die, making your daily matcha latte a powerful tool in your healing arsenal!⁵⁴

Pueraria Mirifica (25 - 50mg/day)

Pueraria Mirifica is an herbal supplement that has been used for centuries in Thailand to promote youthfulness. It is a naturally-occurring phytoestrogen that may be able to reverse

⁴⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5327366/>

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https://journals.lww.com/oncology-times/Fulltext/2016/12250/How_Molecular_Iodine_Attacks_Breast_Cancer.13.aspx

⁵¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3706856/>

⁵² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5641128/>

⁵³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3010581/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23163783>

estrogen deficiency symptoms as you enter menopause. It has also been found to be an antioxidant and to slow the growth of breast cancer tumors.^{55,56}

Modified Citrus Pectin (5 grams per dose)

Derived from the peel and pulp of citrus fruits, modified citrus pectin can help prevent breast cancer cells from being able to attach to the healthy cells in your body, which leads to the metastasis and spread of cancer.⁵⁷

Dr. Mariza's Hormone-Loving Rituals and Protocols

SMOOTHIE/SALAD BOOST

Good nutrition is an easy way to support breast health. When you fuel your body with powerful nutrition, every system reaps the benefits. Studies have shown that the ligands present in flaxseeds and chia seeds can reduce the risk of more serious breast issues. Show your breasts some nutritional love by tossing in some flax and chia to your morning green smoothie, or adding them as a crunchy topper to your salads.

REST AND DESTRESS RITUAL

In the Stress chapter, I discuss the need for your body to unwind and reduce cortisol overload with daily self-care stress management routines supported by essential oils. The essential oil remedies found there coupled with the morning and evening routines will help you to develop your own plan for managing your stress load and cortisol levels. Scheduled time for meditation and prayer help to significantly lower stress levels. Your morning and evening routines should give you proper and predictable time for finding peace in a moment of pause, but you may find that destressing during the day is good for your soul as well. Women's health depends on us allowing ourselves to choose wellness and give ourselves the gift of self-care. Honor your body and your breasts with gratitude by fueling your body with nutritional support and allowing time for movement and proper rest.

BREAST HEALTH SELF-EXAM RITUAL

If this isn't already a part of your monthly routine, I implore you to implement it now. I do mine on the first day of every month so that I don't forget about it, though if you still have a period, you should aim for 7-10 days after your period. Follow the guidelines below. Prevention is key,

⁵⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22460444>

⁵⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15234761>

⁵⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2782490/>

but early detection saves lives, so do your self-checks and follow your trusted healthcare provider's recommendations for mammograms or other screenings, taking into consideration your hereditary risk and the amount of radiation to which you would be exposed.

Self-Exam Steps:

- Look in the mirror for symmetry, noting anything new or different in the appearance of your breasts, including lumps, dimpling or indentations, color changes, or nipple changes
- Place your hands on your hips and then allow your elbows to move towards the mirror, watching for any differences mentioned above. Then swivel your hips to notice differences from all angles. Finally, lift your arms above your head and repeat the same check, paying careful attention for dimpling or skin pulling inward.
- Lie down with your head on a pillow, your arm propped behind your head. Using the opposite hand, place three fingers together and press down, making circular motions from the outside of your breast, then picking up and moving to the next location following a spiral pattern. Report any lumps or abnormalities.
- Continue with the three-fingered approach to check surrounding areas, including your sternum and chest, both above and below the breasts, and under your arms paying attention to lymph nodes or any tiny lumps, even those that are small.

BREAST MASSAGE RITUAL

Did you know that the breast self-exam technique can also be used for a self-care breast massage? Choose your favorite essential oils from the list in this chapter, and use them to massage your breasts (with a carrier oil), increasing circulation and encouraging lymphatic drainage. Or use the Breast Friend Rollerball Blend. Aim for 15 minutes of supportive massage. Pay focused attention to under your arms, where your lymphatic system works hard to flush out toxins. In addition, those pectoral muscles often aren't the focus of massage, so give them some love especially after doing strength training or yoga. While you massage, recognize the gift of self-love you offer and the power that you hold in supporting your own health.

NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT

Powerful nutritional support for breast health can be found in broccoli sprouts and cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and kale. Research has shown that their active ingredient, sulforaphane, can support breast health by suppressing negative entities and reduce inflammation within the body as well. The 21-Day Hormone Makeover Plan in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* leverages these healing benefits by incorporating cruciferous vegetables as options in many of the recipes, but you can add extra to your diet by adding them to green smoothies and including them regularly in your meals. The power lies

within your grasp to support breast health from the inside out. I give thanks that we can use the healing power of nature to support our bodies and strengthen our foundations before problems arise.

GREEN TEA RITUAL

If you haven't dabbled in the deliciousness of green tea, I suggest you give it a shot. There are some delicious options out there, my favorite being matcha green tea (see the recipes in Part III). Research has demonstrated that green tea supports breast health by preventing the metabolization of harmful cells by blocking the uptake of glucose. Its protective effect on the body's healthy cells gives us hope in the face of potential harm. I recommend incorporating green tea into your morning ritual, as it can be a warm hug or an iced treat for you first thing.

YOUR BONES

What's Happening

Our bones are alive and growing, constantly turning over bone cells and replacing most of our skeleton every 10 years. Our peak bone-building years, when the creation of new bone outpaces the removal of old bone, runs through our late twenties. Around that time, we reach peak bone mass, maximum bone density and strength. After that, bone removal starts to outpace bone creation but with proper care, our bones can carry us, strong and upright, throughout our lives. Weak and brittle bones are not a natural part of aging, but far too many of us, about 8 million, have osteoporosis, a bone disease that occurs when the body loses too much bone, makes too little bone, or both. Bones become more porous, or "thin," less dense, and at risk of breaking. Some people lose height, becoming stooped or hunched, when osteoporosis affects the bones of the spine. You can have osteoporosis at any age but our risk rises with menopause because estrogen is very protective of bones and lower estrogen levels increase their vulnerability. Osteoporosis often begins as minor bones loss, a condition known as osteopenia.

Osteoporosis is often called the silent disease because you can't feel your bones weakening. The wake-up call is often a broken bone, usually in the hip, spine, or wrist. Breaking a bone is something we should all strive to avoid, not just for the pain, discomfort, and limited mobility of the break itself, but the repercussions. Twenty percent of seniors who break a hip die within one year from either complications or the surgery to repair it. It's critical to prioritize bone health and work with your doctor to catch any bone loss early. In fact, an International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) survey of women in 11 countries found that many postmenopausal women are in denial about their personal risk. Don't be one of them.

Risk Factors for Osteoporosis

Ones you can't change:

- Age, growing older
- Being small and thin-boned
- Family history

Ones you can:

- Low calcium and vitamin D intake
- Long-term use of certain medications, such as steroids, proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), and aromatase inhibitors
- Lack of physical activity, especially strength-training
- Excessive alcohol consumption

Why It's Happening

Estrogen. Estrogen promotes healthy bones, but as levels decline in menopause, we may experience rapid bone loss. A woman can lose up to 20% of her bone density during the five to seven years following menopause.⁵⁸ The greater your bone density is before menopause, the lower your chances of developing osteoporosis.

Poor diet. A healthy diet rich in vitamin D, calcium, and magnesium is required for strong bones. A nutrient-deficient diet high in processed foods is linked to poor bone quality. Low calcium is associated with low bone mass, rapid bone loss, and high fracture rates. It is best absorbed from foods, such as dark green leafy vegetables. Vitamin D helps with calcium absorption. As we get older, our skin is less efficient at making Vitamin D so supplements are necessary to fill the gaps. Magnesium works closely with calcium and often a supplement is necessary to get the recommended daily amount.

Lack of physical activity. Weight-bearing exercises put stress on your bones, stimulating bone cell growth. Moderate exercises a few times each week can significantly increase bone density, especially in menopausal women.⁵⁹

Poor sleep/circadian rhythm dysfunction. Enough restorative sleep is a must for hormone balance, good health, and strong bones. The hormone melatonin rises and falls, according to your circadian rhythm, to encourage sleep when the sun goes down and wakefulness when the

⁵⁸ <https://www.nof.org/preventing-fractures/general-facts/what-women-need-to-know/>

⁵⁹ Todd JA, Robinson RJ Osteoporosis and exercise Postgraduate Medical Journal 2003;79:320-323.

sun is up. If this rhythm becomes dysregulated for any reason, the development of new bone may be compromised.⁶⁰

Stress. Cortisol, your “stress” hormone, blocks the absorption of calcium, decreasing bone cell growth and bone mass.

What You Can Do to Support Bone Health

You are never too young or old to take care of your bones. Maximize your bone health starting now by following the Hormone Makeover Program in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*. It includes all of the foundational lifestyle changes we know support strong bones and slow bone loss. Do the Makeover and use the following essential oil blends, supplements, herbs, and self-care rituals to support you.

Speak with your healthcare provider about bone density tests (also called bone mineral density tests or BMD tests) and whether testing is appropriate for you.

How to Support Bone Health with Essential Oils

Increasing your activity to support muscle and joint health can be amazingly effective at sustaining your bones, too. The essential oils Helichrysum and Frankincense can help to maintain the health of your joints and muscles by improving cellular vitality and the menthol in mint essential oils such as Peppermint, Spearmint, and Wintergreen offer soothing massage and rejuvenation. In addition, research has shown that trans-caryophyllene (TC), a compound found in Black Pepper, Copaiba, and Clove essential oils prevents bone loss and helps maintain current bone mass. Essential oils should be a powerful ally in preserving your bone health.

TOP 5 ESSENTIAL OILS TO SUPPORT BONE HEALTH

1. Black Pepper
2. Copaiba
3. Clove
4. Mints (Peppermint, Spearmint, Wintergreen)
5. Helichrysum

BONUS: Frankincense

Post-Workout Massage Rollerball Blend

⁶⁰ Liu, Jie et al. “Melatonin effects on hard tissues: bone and tooth.” *International journal of molecular sciences* vol. 14,5 10063-74. 10 May. 2013, doi:10.3390/ijms140510063

- 7 drops Peppermint essential oil
- 7 drops Copaiba essential oil
- 7 drops Frankincense or Helichrysum essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and fill the rest of the way with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll on aching muscles and massage in with deep, smooth strokes, being sure to wash hands well afterwards. Also beneficial for soothing aching joints and areas sore from inflammation with its cooling sensation.

Bone Support Rollerball Blend

- 8 drops Copaiba essential oil
- 5 drops Clove essential oil
- 5 drops Frankincense or Helichrysum essential oil
- 3 drops Black Pepper essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and fill the rest of the way with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll on joints and areas of concern at least twice a day for a warming release.

Bone-Supporting Supplements and Herbs

Consider these natural supplements and herbal recommendations to prevent bone loss and maintain bone density.

Supplements

There are many vital minerals and vitamins that work together to maintain healthy bone density and overall health. Many of these rely on each other for proper absorption, so it is best to ensure you are getting each one of these to get the most out of your supplements. Here are the most important minerals you should consider supplementing with to promote the maintenance of your bone health:

- **Calcium** (500-1000mg/day)
- **Vitamin D** (4,000-5,000 IU/day)
- **Magnesium** (400-600mg/day)

- **Vitamin K2** (1-100mg) *Be aware that vitamin K can interact with blood thinning medications, so speak with your trusted practitioner if you take any other medications before beginning vitamin K supplements.*
- **Vitamin C** (1000-3000mg/day)⁶¹
- **Manganese** -- (1-15mg/day)⁶²
- **Omega-3s** (1000-3000mg/day) *Omega-3 fatty acids ensure your bones retain calcium, prevent degeneration that leads to osteoporosis, maintain healthy cells, and prevent inflammation or tumor growth.*⁶³

Herbs

Phytoestrogens (25-50mg/day)

With estrogen imbalances being a leading cause of bone issues in menopause, phytoestrogens are a natural way to help your body rebalance and support your bone density.⁶⁴ One phytoestrogen is Pueraria mirifica (PM, or miroestrol), an herbal supplement that has been used for centuries in Thailand to promote youthfulness. It is a naturally occurring phytoestrogen that can help restore your bone health by balancing your body's hormone levels.⁶⁵

Matcha green tea

Since matcha captures the power of the entire tea leaf, it offers far more benefits to your body than green tea alone. Packed with antioxidants and phytonutrients, matcha can help prevent bone loss and osteoporosis.⁶⁶

Glucosamine sulfate (1000mg, twice/day)

Glucosamine is a naturally-occurring compound that is a building block for the cartilage in your joints. For this reason, supplementing with glucosamine sulfate is a helpful way to delay joint deterioration, arthritis, and the pain associated with age. It also has anti-inflammatory benefits that enable your body to maintain your bone health.⁶⁷ It can also help ease the symptoms associated with rheumatoid arthritis and enhance overall bone strength.^{68,69}

⁶¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4833003/>

⁶² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15658548>

⁶³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20041817>

⁶⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3276006/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22460444>

⁶⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2754215/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17270442>

⁶⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16953394>

⁶⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22446865>

Curcumin (200-500mg, twice/day)

The powerful anti-inflammatory compound found in turmeric, curcumin also has benefits for your bone health. Taking curcumin can help your body build and repair your bones to restore density and prevent further deterioration.⁷⁰

Dr. Mariza's Hormone-Loving Rituals and Protocols

STRENGTH-TRAINING SUPPORT RITUAL

Strength training with your body as the weight helps strengthen your body's foundation—those bones—while toning your muscles to support your core. I love strength-training exercises because they can be done in the comfort of your own home once you learn the proper technique. I recommend getting some tips from a certified trainer and then doing the exercises on your own 2-3 times a week for regular support. Five basic moves you can use for strength training include squats, bridges, push-ups, planks, and bear crawls. Aim for 15 reps for each activity, being sure to stretch before and after. You can pair an upper body movement with a lower body movement as well, and even begin to incorporate some smaller hand weights (or soup cans!) as you learn the muscle movements. Learn to appreciate the strength in your body, which will empower you.

MOVEMENT RITUALS

I encourage you to incorporate movement into your day to strengthen your body and mind, promote good sleep for circadian rhythm support, and for overall hormone balances. Nature walks and hikes are my go-to for an easy way to get moving, but there are two other specific forms of movement that can be beneficial for your bone health.

The first is Tai Chi, an ancient Chinese form of movement that perfects balance with a series of body movements that flow from one to the next. Take a class or watch instructors online to learn the progressions of the movements. I find it calming to do Tai Chi with mindfulness and meditation while diffusing calming and focusing essential oils.

The second form of movement is jumping on a mini-trampoline (rebounder), which increases circulation and supports lymphatic health in the elimination of toxins. In addition, it strengthens

⁷⁰ Riva A, Togni S, Giacomelli L, et al. Effects of a curcumin-based supplementation in asymptomatic subjects with low bone density: a preliminary 24-week supplement study. *Eur Rev Med Pharmacol Sci*. 2017;21:1684-1689.

your cardiovascular health and can be a super fun way to jam to some tunes while releasing stress and getting your blood flowing. Trying something new can be a great way to support cognitive strength as well!

DITCH CAFFEINE

While this isn't a permanent ritual, you may need this caffeine swap ritual to detox your body from caffeine addiction. Research has shown that caffeine reduces bone mass, making bones brittle and fracture more of a risk. Reprogramming your system to rely on hydration and nutrition rather than sugar and caffeination can take some time; give it a chance. It may take some concerted effort on your part to get rid of that morning coffee habit, though (I know it was hard for me!) to see how your body functions without it. I recommend swapping out your normal caffeine fix with green smoothies, water infusions, or decaf herbal teas. If you find it is too hard to go cold turkey, opt for a matcha latte= which has far less caffeine than your average coffee or soda.

YOUR HEART

What's Going On

Heart disease is the leading cause of death of American women, so we should all be paying extra special attention to our ticker. The term "heart disease" includes a range of conditions that impact your heart and is often used interchangeably with "cardiovascular disease," covering heart conditions specifically involving narrowed or blocked blood vessels that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain, or stroke. No matter what you call it, the sad truth is 1 out of 3 women will die of a heart-related condition and these deaths are largely preventable given the influential role lifestyle factors play. According to the INTERHEART study, 9 out of the 10 strongest risk factors for heart disease are modifiable by changes in diet and lifestyle.⁷¹

The risk of heart disease increases for everyone with age, but our risk increases after menopause with an overall increase in heart attacks is seen within the 10 years following our last period. Menopause doesn't cause heart disease, but the natural hormonal changes of the transition coupled with the negative impact of decades of unhealthy lifestyle habits can take a serious toll on your cardiovascular health at this time.

⁷¹ S. Yusuf, S. Hawken, et al., *Lancet*. 2004 Sep 11-17;364(9438):937-52.

Effect of potentially modifiable risk factors associated with myocardial infarction in 52 countries (the INTERHEART study): case-control study.

Risk Factors for Heart Disease

Ones you can't change:

- Age, growing older
- Family history

Ones you can:

- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Weight
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure
- Uncontrolled diabetes

Why It's Happening

Estrogen. The connection between heart disease and estrogen isn't entirely clear. The thinking is that since estrogen helps to keep blood vessels flexible and able to accommodate blood flow, the natural decline that accompanies menopause increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart disease by stiffening vessels, making blood flow more difficult, working the heart harder, and raising blood pressure. Lower estrogen may also cause your good cholesterol (HDL) to go down, and your bad cholesterol (LDL) to go up. Triglycerides, a type of fat found in your blood that may contribute to hardening of the arteries, also increases because of the drop in estrogen.

Dysregulated insulin and blood sugar/insulin resistance. Especially during the menopausal transition, many women struggle with unstable blood sugar and insulin resistance, when insulin is less efficient at moving blood sugar (glucose) into cells. If left unchecked, insulin resistance can lead to diabetes, and diabetes puts you at higher risk of heart disease and stroke.

Stress. Not only does stress tempt us to make poor lifestyle choices—eating sugary, fatty foods, smoking, drinking too much alcohol, skipping the gym—high levels of cortisol from long-term stress raises cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar, and blood pressure, all common risk factors for heart disease. Stress can also promote the build-up of plaque deposits in the arteries, limiting blood and oxygen to the heart.

Poor diet. Researchers at Tufts found that, in one year, almost half of deaths caused by heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes in a group of 700,000 Americans were linked to a poor diet, high in processed meats and sugar-sweetened beverages and low in fruits, vegetables, nuts,

and seeds.⁷² An organic, whole foods-based diet rich in a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, fish, and poultry and low on processed foods, refined carbs, and added sugars lowers your risk of heart disease by 31%, diabetes by 33%, and stroke by 20%.⁷³

Weight gain. Excess weight puts a strain on your heart and increases your risk of heart disease. In a study of over one million women, the likelihood of coronary heart disease increased as body-mass index (BMI) went up.⁷⁴ According to findings in the Nurses' Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study, middle-aged women who gained 11 to 22 pounds after age 20 were up to three times more likely to develop heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes than those who gained five pounds or fewer. Gaining more than 22 upped their risk even higher.⁷⁵

Lack of regular exercise. A 2013 study showed that, among women ages 50 to 79 with no cardiovascular disease at the start of study, prolonged sitting time was associated with increased heart disease risk regardless of the amount of time spent in leisure-time physical activity.⁷⁶ Moving more and sitting less will do wonders for your heart: improving insulin sensitivity, sleep, stress, blood pressure, cholesterol, vascular health, and so much more.

Poor sleep. A lack of restorative sleep damages your body in a laundry list of ways, from promoting weight gain and insulin resistance to fatigue and brain fog. It's also linked to high blood pressure and a higher risk of heart disease. According to results from the Nurses' Health Study, sleeping 5 or fewer hours per night was associated with a 39% increase in risk of coronary heart disease, and 6 hours per night with an increase of 18%, compared with sleeping 8 hours per night.⁷⁷

⁷² Micha R, Peñalvo JL, Cudhea F, Imamura F, Rehm CD, Mozaffarian D. Association Between Dietary Factors and Mortality From Heart Disease, Stroke, and Type 2 Diabetes in the United States. *JAMA*. 2017;317(9):912–924. doi:10.1001/jama.2017.0947

⁷³ Chiuve SE, Fung TT, Rimm EB, et al. Alternative dietary indices both strongly predict risk of chronic disease. *The Journal of nutrition*. 2012;142:1009-18.

⁷⁴ Canoy D, Cairns BJ, Balkwill A, et al. Body mass index and incident coronary heart disease in women: a population-based prospective study. *BMC Med*. 2013;11:87.

⁷⁵ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/#ref2>

⁷⁶ Chomistek AK, Manson JE, Stefanick ML, et al. Relationship of sedentary behavior and physical activity to incident cardiovascular disease: results from the Women's Health Initiative. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. 2013;61:2346-54.

⁷⁷ Ayas NT, White DP, Manson JE, et al. A Prospective Study of Sleep Duration and Coronary Heart Disease in Women. *Arch Intern Med*. 2003;163(2):205–209. doi:10.1001/archinte.163.2.205

What You Can Do to Support Heart Health

You can lower your risk of heart disease as you age by nourishing your body with heart-loving foods and promoting hormone balance across the board. The Hormone Makeover Program in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* will help you to do this, setting you up with a complete protocol for developing a strong foundation of healthy lifestyle habits for a healthy heart. Do the Makeover and use the following essential oil blends, supplements, herbs, and self-care rituals to support you.

Keep an eye on your heart health by having regular checks of your blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and other risk factors, even if you have no symptoms.

How to Support Heart Health with Essential Oils

Research has shown the primary constituents of essential oils to be supportive in managing stress and anxiety, regulating healthy blood pressure and heart rate, and supporting respiratory health. In addition, their potent antioxidant content greatly supports your foundational health when combined with proper nutrition and exercise.

Carvacrol found in Thyme and Bergamot aids in the regulation of blood pressure and managing anxiousness. Thyme also touts a high thymol content, with vasorelaxant effects that support overall cardiovascular health. Bergamot's limonene provides antioxidant support while its linalool helps to calm the mind and body. Lavender continues to lead the relaxation recommendations as its linalool content reduces and manages anxiety and stress while also aiding in the regulation of blood pressure and heart rate when used both aromatically and topically. Eucalyptus also shines for cardiovascular health, as its 1,8-cineole and alpha-terpinol content reduces high blood pressure to prevent hypotensive episodes and relaxes the body while its camphor content strongly supports respiratory health. And I would be remiss if I didn't list Cassia as an amazing supportive spice, helping to reduce blood glucose levels while increasing insulin.

There are so many essential oils that can support your antioxidant content, reduce blood pressure, maintain heart rate, and aid relaxation, but these top five are my favorites for supporting cardiovascular health in a multi-faceted approach.

TOP 5 ESSENTIAL OILS TO SUPPORT HEART HEALTH

1. Bergamot
2. Cassia

3. Eucalyptus
4. Lavender
5. Thyme

Essential Oil Blends

DIFFUSER BLENDS

Heart Love Diffuser Blend

- 2 drops Bergamot essential oil
- 2 drops Eucalyptus essential oil

Ease Anxiety Diffuser Blend

- 2 drops Lavender essential oil
- 2 drops Bergamot essential oil

ROLLERBALL BLENDS

Heart Support Rollerball Blend

- 5 drops Cassia essential oil
- 5 drops Lavender essential oil
- 5 drops Frankincense essential oil
- 5 drops Bergamot essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and fill the rest of the way with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll over heart and/or on pulse points to support healthy circulatory function.

Ease Anxiety Rollerball Blend

- 7 drops Bergamot essential oil
- 5 drops Eucalyptus essential oil
- 5 drops Lavender essential oil
- Carrier oil of your choice

Add oils to a 10-mL glass rollerball bottle and fill the rest of the way with carrier oil. Replace top and cap, and swirl to combine. To use, roll over wrists and ankles to ease anxiety and support overall mental wellness.

Heart-Supporting Supplements and Herbs

Heart health depends on many vitamins, minerals, and nutrients. Consider these natural supplements and herbal recommendations to keep your heart strong.

Supplements

Magnesium Glycinate (200-600mg/day)

Maintaining adequate magnesium levels in your body is super important for keeping your heart healthy. It plays a vital role in making sure your heart muscles relax between beating contractions so it continues to work efficiently.

There are lots of different types of magnesium, but they are *not* all the same. I recommend Essentially Whole® Magnesium Restore because this chelated form of magnesium is bioavailable and easily put to use by your body without causing gastrointestinal discomforts.

Vitamins A, D, C and E

Each of these vitamins plays an important role in your heart's health. Being deficient in any of these puts you at a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, strokes, and more, so making sure you are eating a balanced diet and taking supplements to complement your healthy lifestyle is vital to keeping your heart beating happily!

B Complex Vitamins

While there is conflicting evidence surrounding whether or not taking B vitamins directly improves your heart health, they are beneficial for warding off some of the root causes that lead to heart issues down the road. They play an important role in regulating blood sugar, stress responses, sleep, and more, so they are a good idea for everyone in our age group to take to promote overall health!

When it comes to choosing a B vitamin supplement, you want to make sure you are selecting an activated (or methylated) B complex vitamin. That way, your body will be able to absorb them and put them to use immediately! Essentially Whole® Activated B Complete is a great option because it contains the ideal balance of B vitamins in a methylated form.

Coenzyme Q10 (50mg-100mg/day)

CoQ10 can relieve symptoms of cardiovascular disease by reducing the oxidative stress that takes a toll on your heart's cells. It activates an antioxidant enzyme that helps to protect your body from further damage. The best way to take CoQ10 is in the bioavailable form ubiquinol because it absorbs better into your bloodstream. People who take statin drugs in particular

should be on CoQ10 supplements because those drugs deplete your body's natural saturation of this essential enzyme.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids (1,000-3,000mg/day)

Omega-3s are essential nutrients that help your body cut through inflammation. As far as your heart health goes, they maintain the proper balance of triglycerides in your bloodstream and prevent them from building up and causing plaques or blockages.

Herbs

Curcumin (200-500mg, twice/day)

Derived from the rich, yellow spice turmeric, Curcumin protects your heart's health by preventing blood clots, lowering bad cholesterol, and diminishing overall inflammation that can lead to heart attacks or strokes. There is some evidence that it may even guard against heart failure and keep this vital organ pumping optimally.⁷⁸

Matcha Green Tea

Matcha contains powerful compounds that reduce inflammation, help maintain balanced blood sugar levels, and provide necessary antioxidants to remove toxic buildup from your cells. In particular, the antioxidant epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) can protect your heart from damage.

Garlic (600-1,200mg/day)

Garlic can significantly lower your blood pressure and bad cholesterol levels to keep your heart and circulatory system thriving when you take it in conjunction with a healthy lifestyle.⁷⁹

Berberine (900-2,000mg/day)

Derived from several different plants, Berberine supplements can lower your LDL cholesterol and triglycerides while promoting healthy HDL cholesterol. It also improves your insulin sensitivity to help keep your blood sugar in balance.⁸⁰

Cinnamon (1-6g/day)

⁷⁸

[https://www.internationaljournalofcardiology.com/article/S0167-5273\(09\)00113-2/fulltext#sec87478051e55](https://www.internationaljournalofcardiology.com/article/S0167-5273(09)00113-2/fulltext#sec87478051e55)

⁷⁹ <https://academic.oup.com/jn/article/146/2/389S/4584698>

⁸⁰ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0021915015301416>

A daily dose of cinnamon can help maintain healthy cholesterol balance by decreasing your bad LDL and triglyceride levels. It can also protect against blood sugar instability that leads to diabetes (which increases your risk of heart disease down the road).⁸¹

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GOOD SWEAT RITUAL

I'm not talking about the hot-flash sweats, but some good old-fashioned sweat caused by cardiovascular exercise. My favorite activity for this is dancing, but you can also try jumping on a rebounder (see above in Bone Health Rituals) or a brisk walk or hike. If you are already accustomed to jogging, running, or another sport like tennis (Mom loves it!), then carry on with it, superwoman! Getting the heart pumping oxygenates your cells and boosts metabolism. Find an activity that works for you, and try it 1-2 times each week.

That said, if you aren't ready for a good sweat, at least aim to move your body for at least 20-30 minutes every day either with a good nature walk or some sort of moving activity. It not only supports cardiovascular health, but is a great stress-relieving activity and time for reflection. Or make it a group activity by calling on your tribe and chatting while you move as long as it continues to empower you with positivity!

RESTFUL SLEEP

Use your nighttime ritual to prepare your body and mind for restful slumber. Your body needs this time to rest, recharge, and replenish, as well as to balance your circadian rhythm, the 24-hour internal clock that regulates almost every bodily function. Regular sustained sleep beginning at the same time every night and supported with the calming power of essential oils does wonders for your body's cardiovascular and metabolic health. I recommend lowering the temperature to 68-70°F (19-21°C) to slow down the heart and blood flow and promote sustained rest.

DENTAL HYGIENE ROUTINE

I know, you're wondering how brushing your teeth supports your heart, but dental hygiene is more than just teeth. It is keeping the microbiome and pH of your mouth balanced to support overall health. As an entryway to your body, your mouth harbors positive and negative bacteria, but also pathways to release toxins. Oil pulling is an ancient Ayurvedic remedy that helps to detox bacteria, free radicals, and parasites from your teeth and mucus membranes

⁸¹ annfammed.org/content/11/5/452.long

while reducing harmful inflammation. To practice, simply use organic cold-pressed unrefined coconut oil with 1-2 drops of Lemon, Frankincense, or Clove essential oil. The coconut oil will melt in your mouth as you push and pull it through your mouth and in between your teeth much like mouthwash. I recommend starting with an empty stomach, and pull for at least 5 minutes, working up to 20 minutes, which you can do while you do any activity. Then spit it out in the trash can, as it might coat your drainpipes. Not only does it freshen your breath and whiten your teeth, it supports your cardiovascular health. Give it a try!

A Final Word on Supporting Breast, Bone, and Heart Health

The basic recipe for healthy breasts, strong bones, and a strong heart is the same as it is for hormone balance: a nutrient-dense diet, regular physical activity, stress management, good sleep, and self-care rituals to support you physically and emotionally. That's why the Hormone Makeover Plan in Part III of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution* is your go-to next step.

Now, I know it can be tough to make these lifestyle changes and stick with them if you are struggling with poor sleep and fatigue due to insomnia and hot flashes. That's why targeting the symptoms that disrupt your quality of life and sap your motivation the most—with the help of the chapters in Part II of *The Essential Oils Menopause Solution*—will make it easier for you to adopt the positive foundational lifestyle changes needed to put you on track for total health. With a handle on your most troublesome symptoms and the Makeover Plan in Part III you'll become comfortable with new routines and habits, make your perimenopause and menopause transition easier, and boost breast, bone, and heart health.

And please know: *It is never too late*. If you have been diagnosed with breast cancer, osteoporosis, or heart disease, these lifestyle changes will further your healing and benefit you on your health journey.