

Relief From Menopause - Proper Diet CAN Help!

By Dawn Olsen

Here's a four letter word I'll bet you haven't heard in the last ten minutes! Now, hold on just a minute. Before you stop reading or let your mind wander into the pits, let me tell you what this hated four letter word is. It's the word DIET, and it's a word that no one, particularly women, like hearing ... especially at this time of year.

"Oh, sure," you say. "Just when I'm about to shop, cook, bake, and put every scrumptious thing I can think of out for everyone else to eat, now you're going to tell me I need to think about ... well, you know ... that word?"

Actually, I'm not going to tell you what you can't eat, but rather what you CAN eat. After all, wouldn't you, being a woman going through menopause, like to know what you can eat, not gain the extra weight, and still enjoy all the extra large meals without aggravating your hot flashes and bringing on the headaches? Now see! The word "diet" can actually be a good word. Let me show you what I mean.

Often times, a woman will go her whole life eating food from fast-food chains, boxed meals in the microwave, quick fatty snacks, and 101 other breaded, deep-fried, or grease-laden foods that aren't what she needs to keep her energy levels up and her systems running smoothly. Rather than running like a well-oiled machine and humming along, she ends up being more like a gunk filled engine that is just about ready to come to a grinding halt. With just a few minor but constant changes, you can clear the gunk and start humming again, literally!

So, stop following all the fads and believing all the infomercials that promise a "new you in only one month for \$19.99". How about a "new you" beginning today and lasting for the rest of your life? And, I might add, a longer life at that, without the \$19.99. "How," you ask?

It's just a matter of knowing what foods to eat, how to prepare them, and for what reasons, plus a couple of tweaks for added personal benefits and comfort. That doesn't mean you have to put the microwave into storage, but think about it. When you're in a hurry, NOT heating food is even faster than the microwave, and often times much better for you anyway. So let's get started and see how many of these foods and tricks you can, or rather are willing, to adapt to your lifestyle.

First, eating fruits and vegetables is pretty basic, and not something you probably thought was really important. Of course, they increase your overall health, but what do they do for a menopausal woman? Actually, many fruits and vegetables have phytoestrogens and borons already in them.

What that means is this: Phytoestrogens are a weak form of the natural estrogen that you have in your body. It's that hormone that decreases as we get older and puts us into menopause, if you will. The lack of it jumpstarts the menopausal symptoms we all experience to one degree or another.

Boron is a mineral that helps to keep the estrogen in your body. So by eating more of the fruits and vegetables that contain the highest forms of phytoestrogens and boron, we end up fooling our bodily systems into thinking there's more estrogen in our body than what is really there. Consequently, many of the menopausal symptoms often subside, and at times, even stop altogether.

So what are these particularly glorious fruits and vegetables? The fruits are plums, prunes, strawberries, apples, pears, grapes, grapefruit, oranges, and raspberries. Now, there has got to be at least one out of that entire list that you like! They are wonderful! Not only do they fill that "sweet-tooth" craving for dessert after a meal, they're naturally low in fat, are filled with vitamins and minerals, and very high in fiber to help keep the systems flowing, if you know what I mean. They're terrific for avoiding the constipation that often accompanies menopause.

For vegetables, the list is even longer: sweet potatoes, lettuce, beets, bell peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, onions, soybeans, and turnips. All of these can be eaten raw or cooked, but raw is better since the nutrients they contain aren't damaged or destroyed by heating first.

You may have noticed I didn't mention beans. Beans are incredibly good in alleviating menopausal symptoms. Each one is like a mini-package of nutrients because they're filled with high amounts of vitamins and minerals, calcium, folic acid, B-6, phytoestrogens, and they're a low-fat source of protein. They can also slow your appetite because they absorb glucose. In other words, you won't be as hungry as often, which means you won't feel the need to snack between meals.

As a quick tip, you can add beans just about anywhere in your diet. Include string beans or kidney beans in chili, salads, or stews. Buy canned bean soups or order side dishes of beans or bean soup when eating out. For snacks, use bean dips or make a quick three bean salad. The possibilities are

endless ... and delicious.

Something else you will need to include in your diet is fat. Yes, you heard me right; FAT. The problem is that too many women include the wrong kind of fat. It's the saturated fat and trans-fatty acid that we need to avoid. That's the fat that quickly moves to your thighs, hips, butt, and around the middle; just what we don't want. You might just as well paste the chips right to your butt because that's where it will end up anyway.

If you think about it, when was the last time you saw a robin hopping in your yard with a butt wider than she was? Throw a worm, seeds, or a piece of bread in the yard and see how long they last. Then lay a chip out there and see if it's even touched before it turns green. If your neighbor's domesticated dog stays home, that chip will be there until it gets mowed over. Even the wild animals know what to eat and what not to. They eat what they need to survive and accommodate their lifestyle. We should all be so wise.

We can also learn a lesson from farmers that raise livestock. Before going to market, livestock is often "fattened up", so to speak. Ask a farmer what nutrients they do and don't feed them and for what purposes. Personally, I don't plan to go to market except to shop, so I certainly have no need, nor desire, to be fattened up. For that reason, knowing what the correct and incorrect fats are is crucial.

The wrong fats are those that come in packaged things like cookies, chips, and crackers. The right fats that we need are those that contain Omega 3 fat. These are found in fish, fish oil, olive oil, and canola oil. Oh, sure, they're a little more expensive to buy initially, but the savings come in the form of all the medical bills you won't be paying down the road. Then too, you'll live healthier and enjoy the additional benefits along the way.

You can also change your fat intake by using these oils to cook with, by eating leaner meats, and by shopping for low-fat dairy products. If you want to stay away from butter, buy margarine in tubs that include liquid canola or olive oil that are listed as their first ingredients. Because most packaged foods still use Omega-6 hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils, stay away from those and cook more fresh foods.

One more point to be made here concerning fat is this. Not only is what we put in our body important, but when it goes into them is just as important. Most women, and men too for that matter, eat their largest meal as the last meal of the day. Instead of eating a large breakfast to charge them up with energy and nutrients to be used throughout the day, they generally eat more as the day goes on.

Naturally, lethargy and a foggy mind set in and the fat they've taken in has no way to become burned off. By eating the larger meal late in the day, most then sit in front of the television or computer until bedtime and everything settles into place instead of being used to maintain a higher activity level. It's actually ironic that this is often called "vegging". You can combat the "slows" by eating your large meal in the morning and then tapering off. It gives your body what it needs to be alert and active, and it uses the time to remove the excess that isn't needed.

There are many small changes that you can make in your menopause diet that will allow you to go through the hormonal highs and lows with grace. They'll help your weight, your attitude, and your other symptoms naturally, without all the additional medications that usually come with a list of side effects and warnings. If you're not quite ready to initiate all of the changes at once, try adding a new one every few days. Mark the calendar and make a point of following through.

As time goes by, your menopause symptoms will disappear, but the better eating habits and new found youthful attitude will stay with you always. Just think of it! You could be the healthiest and youngest looking grandmother around! Why not?!

About the Author

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