



# WOMEN'S HEALTH

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE

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Many women wonder whether it is OK to work out during their period. The answer is easy: Yes! In fact, you may find that you can be more physically active and at a greater intensity at certain times of the month than at other times.

## DOES MY ENERGY LEVEL CHANGE DURING MY PERIOD?

It might. Some women report low energy levels during their period, while other women have more energy than usual during this time. Changing hormone levels through the menstrual cycle may be the cause.

### WEEK 1

On the first day of your period, oestrogen and progesterone levels are at their lowest. But they begin a gradual rise during your period. It may be easier to get active than in the previous weeks.

### WEEK 2

In the week after your period ends, your energy levels might begin to go up. Oestrogen levels begin rising quickly in preparation for ovulation (releasing an egg from the ovary).

### WEEK 3

Oestrogen levels peak around the time of ovulation, about two weeks before the next period for most women. When oestrogen levels fall quickly after ovulation and progesterone levels begin rising, you may feel more tired or sluggish than usual. This does not mean that you should not exercise. In fact, being active might help boost your mood and give you more energy. Try exercising first thing in the morning, before your energy level goes down as the day goes on.

### WEEK 4

In the week before your next period, you may feel less energy as both oestrogen and progesterone levels are falling (if you are not pregnant). Physical activity may help premenstrual symptoms (PMS) get better even if your energy levels are low.

Try keeping a fitness journal to track your menstrual cycle and your energy levels during each workout. After a few months, you should be able to see when you have energy during your cycle.

If you take hormonal birth control, like the pill, patch, shot, or vaginal ring, your energy levels may still go up and down with your cycle, but the differences may not be as noticeable.

## DOES MY MENSTRUAL CYCLE AFFECT MY ABILITY TO EXERCISE?

No. Researchers have not been able to find any differences during the menstrual cycle in a woman's ability to exercise. The only significant finding was for endurance events, or long sports events, like marathons. In endurance events, women who had already ovulated but not started their period yet had a harder time exercising during hot and humid weather.

## WHAT IF I'M WORKING OUT A LOT AND I DON'T GET MY PERIOD?

Exercising too much can cause missed menstrual periods or make your periods stop entirely. Irregular or missed periods are more common in athletes and other women who train hard regularly. But if you haven't worked out in a long time and suddenly start a vigorous fitness routine, your period could stop or become irregular.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have irregular or missed periods. A regular period is a sign of good health. These period problems can lead to more serious health problems, including problems getting pregnant and loss of bone density.



## IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTH TRAINING FOR WOMEN

You may have heard that weight training can make women look bulky from building muscle, that it is dangerous or even muscle turning into fat if you stop. None of that is true. In fact, the NHS recommends to stay healthy, adults should take part in two types of physical activity each week, aerobic exercise, and strength training. Weight lifting carries so many benefits that will lead to being healthier, stronger, and leaner.

A few benefits are:

- Improved fat loss.
- Enhance your mood and reduce stress.
- Gain strength without bulking.
- Reduce your risk of injury, back pain, and arthritis.
- Improve your athletic performance.
- Reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes.

## FITNESS TIPS FOR MENOPAUSE: WHY FITNESS COUNTS

Regular physical activity is crucial for women facing menopause. Consider what physical activity can do for you

Menopause is an important transition in women's lives. Use it as a reminder to take good care of yourself. Start by considering these fitness tips for menopause.

### WHY IS FITNESS IMPORTANT DURING MENOPAUSE?

Exercise during and after menopause offers many benefits, including:

- Preventing weight gain. Women tend to lose muscle mass and gain abdominal fat around menopause. Regular physical activity can help prevent weight gain.
- Reducing the risk of cancer. Exercise during and after menopause can help you lose excess weight or maintain a healthy weight, which might offer protection from various types of cancer, including breast, colon, and endometrial cancer.

- Strengthening your bones. Exercise can slow bone loss after menopause, which lowers the risk of fractures and osteoporosis.
- Reducing the risk of other diseases. Menopause weight gain can have serious implications for your health. Excess weight increases the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Regular exercise can counter these risks.
- Boosting your mood. Physically active adults have a lower risk of depression and cognitive decline.

### HOW DOES EXERCISE AFFECT MENOPAUSE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

Being overweight or having a BMI greater than 30 (obesity) might be associated with hot flashes, but further research is needed. Exercise isn't a proven way to reduce menopausal symptoms, such as hot flashes and sleep disturbances. However, regular exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight, relieve stress, and improve your quality of life.



## CONSIDER YOUR EXERCISE OPTIONS AND THEIR BENEFITS:

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- **Aerobic activity.** Aerobic activity can help you shed excess pounds and maintain a healthy weight.
- **Strength training.** Regular strength training can help you reduce body fat, strengthen your muscles, strengthen your bones, and burn calories more efficiently.
- **Stretching.** Stretching can help improve flexibility. Set aside time to stretch after each workout, when your muscles are warm and receptive to stretching.
- **Stability and balance.** Balance exercises improve stability and can help prevent falls. Try simple exercises, such as standing on one leg while brushing your teeth.

### HOW CAN YOU STAY MOTIVATED?

Set SMART goals. Rather than vowing to exercise more, for example, commit to a daily 30-minute walk after dinner. Frequently update your goals as you achieve greater levels of fitness. Teaming up with someone — such as a partner, friend, or neighbour — can make a difference, too.

