



IT'S HER GYM

"YOUR BIOLOGICAL CLOCK IS STILL TICKING, SO DON'T TAKE MENOPAUSE LYING DOWN"

IT'S HER MENOPAUSE

HOT FLUSHES, MOOD SWINGS, WEIGHT GAIN... IT DOESN'T REALLY HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS.

50 REALLY IS THE NEW 30. YOU'VE JUST GOT TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.

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One day the penny dropped...

My usually happy, confident demeanour was replaced by an irrational, sleep-deprived, forgetful, crazy woman who couldn't understand why she was slowly putting on weight and getting really depressed about it.

I hadn't figured on menopause - after all, I was only 49. Surely menopause was for "old women". The fact that I was an ex-smoker probably brought it on a bit earlier. My descent into menopause wasn't graceful. I certainly didn't handle it like a lady.



With Mum. Aged 41.
30 cigarettes a day. Down to 90kg
from 106kg. A long way to go.

I screamed and ranted and yo-yo'ed for 12 months or so (to the point where I thought I needed psychiatric help) then I decided to clean up my act and learn as much as I could about this unavoidable period of my life.

After all, I'm probably going to live for another 40 years or so, so the changes and habits I develop now had better be bloody good ones!

So reader, that's where the content for this little blurb comes from; my years of study and personal experience.

Sue W.



January 2015 - Proud
Parents. Son's wedding.



I'm putting on weight around my middle and hips and I can't get it to budge. Why?

This is perhaps the most involved and multi-faceted issue for all of us. The first and most important reason is our muscle to body mass ratio. Now stop thinking body-builders or weight lifters. Think about YOU. YOUR muscle to body mass ratio.

Muscle needs calories to EXIST – just to BE. A woman the same age as you who regularly does resistance training (more on that soon) will burn more calories on a day to day basis – just sitting on the couch! – than a woman who doesn't do regular exercise. So, muscle is an important part of determining our metabolism's effectiveness.

So what's this got to do with menopause? Well, the biggest single issue of menopause is our drop in estrogen – estrogen (amongst other things) regulates our body's ability to store and use protein. Protein is the building block of muscle. Get the picture?

You are different now. Be prepared to make changes to your diet and activity levels.

So, not only are you getting weaker through muscle loss, your metabolism is slowing down... hence, you put on weight. MOST (not all) women also tend to lead a more sedentary life after 50.

The average weight gain by Australian women between the ages of 38 and 55 is between five kilograms and 15 kilograms. Then it can sky-rocket after that if you don't put measures in place to control it.

Here's a little known fact – to stay the same weight you were pre-menopause after the dust has settled – you'd have to give up 300-400 calories per day. That's not to lose any weight – that's just to stay the same!

Can you fix it? Definitely! But you have to be prepared to make changes to your diet and activity levels. Don't look back at what used to work for you before – you are a different being now. You are a menopausal or post menopausal woman with a different set of characteristics both mental and physical.

We all know that we are putting our long term health at risk by being overweight so don't just take menopause lying down! Do something!



There are so many diets and exercise regimes out there that I get totally confused?

Yes there are and most of them aren't suitable for middle-aged or pre/post menopausal women. I'll keep saying it – you're different now and you have a different set of needs.

Firstly, you have to commit to doing regular exercise at least four times per week. Your exercise regime can't just be walking. You need to incorporate some "resistance" type training as well for your muscle strength as well as for guarding against osteoporosis.

Secondly, you have to make changes to your diet. By increasing your protein intake, reducing your bad fats and sugary/starchy carbohydrates and keeping an eye on your alcohol habits, you'll make a huge difference.

If you want your body to change, you have to make changes. If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got.

Some of us like a challenge (think a fixed time period program with an end goal), some of us respond to "black and white" programs (but the changes never seem to stick), whilst most of us actually do better making smaller changes over time.

Smaller changes over a longer time instil new habits that we can live with for 40 years. You should be thinking long-term here – not quick fix.

Resistance training can be with machines, free weights (dumbbells, kettlebells) or your own bodyweight (think pushups, squats etc). 30 minutes a day is enough.



What about the hot flushes, mood swings and lack of sleep?

That's your hormones (or rather lack of) at work again. But most of the symptoms are exacerbated by diet and lifestyle habits.

Did you know that if you are too hot in bed, that you won't get into the deep restful stage of sleep that your body needs for it's metabolism to work as it should at night? So maybe your doona is making you fat? Lack of deep sleep leads to weight gain – this is a well documented scientific fact.

So, let's just throw the odd hot flush into the mix and make it worse okay? No! Let's look at how your diet can impact on your sleep patterns.



Carbohydrates (sugar) make your body temperature rise so by avoiding high sugar/carb foods late in the day, your body temperature will be lower. Also, avoid caffeine late in the day (yes, that includes chocolate!). Alcohol does the same thing. This is a whole scientific process that is best explained by a professional – otherwise this missive is going to be 500 pages long. But just trust me okay?

Stress from lack of sleep will make you moody and irritable. You know that feeling that you sometimes get when you're wound up and just can't seem to calm down? That feeling when you just want to lash out?

A lot of that can be influenced by eating cleaner, less processed foods. All those chemicals can't be good – especially for us women who are battling fluctuating hormones as well.

My most recent discovery is vitamin B. I'd often looked at those "stress and anxiety" multi-vitamin B's on the shelf in stores and thought what a load of rubbish. Not anymore. I take three a day and I know I am more steady and happy when I keep my dosage up.



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So in closing, menopause is hardwork.

It's a real wake-up call if you've neglected your diet and exercise in your younger years but it's never too late to change. Most of my clients are in the 40+ age bracket; with the fittest group being 50+.

Why? Well one of the benefits of being in the 50+ age group is that (in most cases) the kids are self-sufficient or have left the nest so we finally have time to devote to our own health and fitness.

50 really is the new 30.

You've just got to believe in yourself and CHANGE.



About the author

Sue Walton is 53 years old. At 41 she weighed 108kgs, smoked 30 cigarettes per day and drank alcohol every night of the week. Sue is a stepmother of six and grandmother to five littlies.

Sue used to be a corporate career woman who at 48, decided to use her own weightloss and fitness experience to help other women in a city where it was most needed... Bendigo.

She invested in a local facility, uprooted herself and her husband from their home in Kilmore and is committed to helping Bendigo women achieve their own fitness goals and potential.

