

*\*content written for a women's digital health platform to go live in winter '22*

## **How Building Muscle Can Help with Menopausal Weight Gain**

Women gain an average of 1–1.5 pounds per year between the ages of 45 and 60.<sup>1,2,3</sup> In the US, almost two-thirds of women between 40–59 and three-fourths of women over 60 are overweight.<sup>2</sup>

Research has shown that while this weight gain is not caused directly by menopause or the hormone replacement prescription medications used to treat menopause-related conditions and is more likely due to lifestyle and other changes in the body related to aging,<sup>1,2</sup> the hormonal shift of perimenopause does correlate with a redistribution of body fat. This explains why many women notice that rather than around the hips, thighs, and buttocks, fat begins to settle around the abdomen.<sup>1,2</sup>

In general, avoiding energy dense, processed foods and choosing whole foods that are nutrient rich and minimally processed might help stave off weight gain.<sup>4</sup> Another possible aid in staving off this weight gain is to build lean muscle.

### **Why Build Muscle?**

As women age, their metabolism slows, and lean muscle mass decreases.<sup>1</sup> Since muscles burn more calories than fat<sup>5</sup> building and maintaining muscles is important to not only burn calories more efficiently, but also to protect bones.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Suggestions:**

- **Eat more protein**  
Protein helps build muscle;<sup>6</sup> as such, eating adequate amounts of protein can contribute to the maintenance and promotion of a healthy weight. Guidelines for women over 50 is to eat 1-1.5 grams of protein per kilogram of weight (1 kilogram =2.2 pounds) daily,<sup>7</sup> or 20-25 grams of high-quality protein per meal.<sup>8</sup> This calculator may give you an idea of what is recommended for you: <https://www.calculator.net/protein-calculator.html> **(link)**
- **Do cardiovascular and strength-training exercises**  
In addition to all the other benefits exercise brings, strength-training and cardio workouts not only help build muscles, but also burn calories to aid in weight loss.<sup>2</sup>

**The bottom line:** Studies have shown that a diet high in protein, combined with regular exercise and strength training are beneficial in women's maintaining a healthy weight.<sup>9,10</sup>

*The contents of this article are for informational purposes only and not intended to provide medical advice, treat, diagnose, or replace the advice of a licensed medical professional. Please consult with your healthcare provider before making any treatment, dietary, exercise, or lifestyle changes to ensure that these changes are appropriate for you.*

#### **Sources**

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