

# BE STRONG

Eat. Move. Live

# THE KNOWLEDGE

## HOW TO MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE

**This week's focus:** The menopause is an inevitability for all women. But what isn't inevitable is the struggle to manage our weight, as well as our menopausal symptoms. So this week we look at how we can manage our weight through the menopause and beyond.

**Why is it important?:** 50% of the population experience the menopause, and it is often blamed for the reason to keep our weight under control. If we can understand what is going on in our bodies, we can come up with strategies to improve our chances of success at weight management.

**What will we tell you?:** What is happening during the menopause and what we can do about it.

### MENOPAUSE FACTS & STRATEGIES

- 1 Hormone production changes, which means that oestrogen and androgen levels change. These hormones can affect our feelings of satiety. Changes in hormones also means the way we store fat changes. We store it in our breasts and hips when we are younger, peri menopause and menopause hormone changes make us more prone to storing it around our abdomen. Psychological factors associated with hormonal changes can impact mood – leading to unhealthy eating behaviours – 'eating our feelings' – bingeing and eating high calorie food, drinking more alcohol
- 2 Chronological ageing causes our metabolism to slow down. When our metabolism slows, we burn through calories at a slower rate. As we age our muscle mass reduces naturally. The more lean muscle we have the faster our metabolism works, conversely if our muscle mass reduces, our metabolism will also slow down.
- 3 Changes in family circumstances, such as less dependent children, potentially leads to reduced activity levels, more freedom and perhaps an increase in food and drink eaten out of the home, therefore less calories burned and less control of calories consumed.
- 4 Check your calories and your physical activity level settings in your weight tracker – making sure all your stats are correct in weight tracker, so that we can give you the most relevant and accurate calorie calculation.
- 5 Make sure you get a sweat on – Aerobic exercise which gets you out of breath actually helps to burn the visceral fat stored in the abdomen. You still need to get that calorie deficit to lose weight but this type of exercise has been shown to target visceral fat and reducing disease risk associated with carrying fat in this area.
- 6 Rebuild your muscle mass – Taking part in strengthening workouts or activity that uses major muscle groups will help to build muscle mass. The more lean muscle you have, the faster your metabolism is and the more efficiently you will burn calories.
- 7 Prevent false hunger pangs – Now you know that you might be at risk of false hunger pangs, take steps to prevent them – increase protein and fibre consumption, to keep you feeling fuller, and drink plenty of water, to keep your tummy feeling full.
- 8 Find other ways to improve your mood – if you know that you use food as a crutch and emotional support, acknowledge it and work on finding other ways to improve your mood. Some exercise, a pamper session, a nice bath, a chat with a friend, reasoning your feelings out with self-talk, putting on your favourite tune and dancing round your kitchen. Try to reduce 'eating your feelings'.

#### KEY MESSAGES

Whilst mother nature may seem like she's against us as we age, there are things that we can do about it.

We **can** take control and make the best of our situation, giving our bodies the best chance to age healthily so that you can live life to the full, for as long as you can.