RETHINK Menopause

Enhancing health and wellbeing in mid-life, a holistic guide



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RETHINK Menopause

Welcome to this guide, designed to support you to enhance your health and well-being in mid-life.

There are five key areas that we will look at;
sleep, nutrition, movement, rest and connection.

I invite you to look through the booklet and complete a self-rating out of 10 for each area, where 10 is “optimum”.

”we’re all different in what we need”

The offers are almost all coulds not shoulds.
We’re all different in what we need, and you know yourself best.

Though if you score yourself 1/10 for sleep and 8/10 for nutrition, you’ve got more to gain from trying to move the 1 than the 8, although it may feel much more of a challenge to do so.

”coulds not shoulds”

In my 20+ years as an NHS GP, I've seen the amazing power of simple daily habits like walking the dog or starting the day with 5 minutes of breathwork.

Once we begin to make small changes, bigger ripple effects often follow.

”small daily habits”

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Often, we know what to do, but putting that into practice can be really, really hard, especially with the shifting landscape of the menopause transition. Sometimes we may feel as though we're our own worst enemy. We eat well most of the time, but when tired, we'll reach for something sugary and have an extra coffee (or three) to get us through the day, then crash and not feel up to the walk we had planned after dinner. This commonly feeds into guilt and lower self-esteem.

Cultivating self-compassion, where we treat ourselves with the same kindness we would show our best friend, really can make all the difference.

"self-compassion is key"

It can also be helpful to consider our motivation to make any changes. For some of us, it will be to feel better, for others, it will be role-modelling healthy habits to our children. Some of us benefit from a target like running a 10k to raise money for a charity, others of us need accountability from a friend, and others won't be sure.

We're all different.

what motivates you?

So, let's start by looking at these five key areas for you, and what could be involved in your plan to enhance your health and wellbeing.

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Sleep

When reflecting on your sleep, consider how long it takes you to fall asleep, how often you wake, whether you wake feeling refreshed and whether your sleep affects you in the daytime.

MY SCORE /10

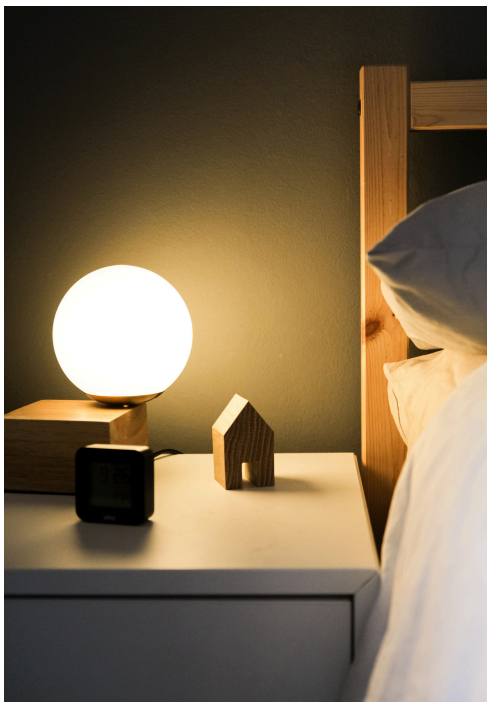
Sleep hygiene advice

- **morning and bedtime routine**, including at weekends
- **morning daylight** for at least 20 minutes
- **caffeine** before noon
- **exercise** helps, ideally with cardio not too late in the day
- if taking a **nap**, make it before 3pm
- stop **smoking** & reduce **alcohol**, minimise food before bed
- **screen free** hour before bed & dark, cool, gadget-free room
- try not to lie in bed awake.

CBT-insomnia, Magnesium supplements, yoga, strength training, massage, and acupuncture can all help.

I'M ALREADY DOING THIS

I'D LIKE TO TRY



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Nutrition

When reflecting on your nutrition, consider your history with food. Menopause is a common time for tricky eating patterns to resurface, and where we may need most self-compassion.

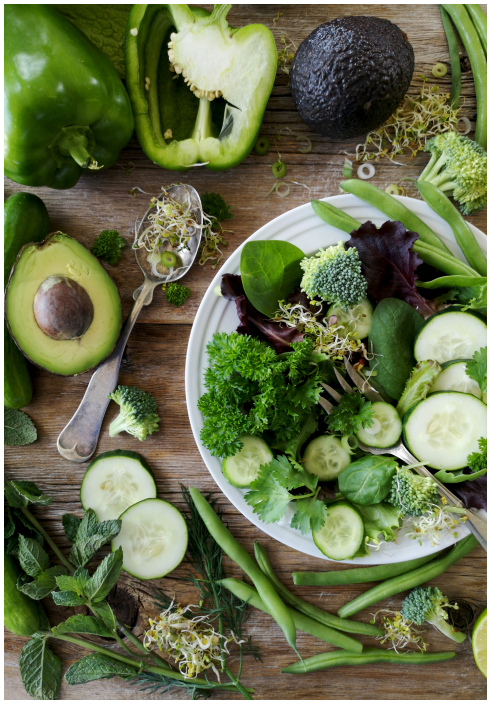
MY SCORE /10

Nutrition advice

- **whole food, plant-based**, with complex carbs & unsaturated fats (extra virgin olive oil, avocado, nuts & seeds)
- **microbiome** support with diversity (30 plants per week), fibre, and minimal ultraprocessed foods
- **protein** at each meal for metabolism and bone health
- **phyto-oestrogens** (tofu, chickpeas, edamame beans)
- **alcohol** - less than 14 units/week, perhaps none at all
- no smoking (definitely a should not could!)
- plenty of **fluids**, minimise caffeine
- **vitamin D** supplements in Winter months.
- **Creatine** supplements to support strength and cognition

I'M ALREADY DOING THIS

I'D LIKE TO TRY



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Movement

When reflecting on your movement, consider how much time you spend sitting each day and if you incorporate cardio, strength, restorative and pelvic floor exercises every week.

MY SCORE /10

Movement advice

- **weight-bearing** exercise every day e.g. walking
- **cardio** exercise at moderate intensity or above for 150 minutes each week e.g. dancing, swimming, netball, running
- **strength** training three times each week (another should, not could) e.g. body weight exercises, resistance bands and weights sessions that progressively increase over time
- **restorative** movement e.g. yoga or pilates, ideally with breathwork too
- **pelvic floor** exercises every day, including contractions and relaxation, ideally with breathwork too.

I'M ALREADY DOING THIS

I'D LIKE TO TRY



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Rest

When reflecting on your rest, consider if you take rest every day and if you are able to prioritise purposeful rest when things are busy. We benefit from rest every day, not just at weekends.

MY SCORE /10

Rest advice

- **breathwork** practices
- yoga or other slow, gentle, restorative **movement**
- sing, play or listen to **music**
- be in **nature**; garden, climb a mountain, swim in a river
- meditation or **mindfulness** practices
- **creative** activities like sewing, pottery
- **read** a favourite novel
- **daydream**
- separate work and home, especially if you work from home
- try to keep your **phone** out of the way when resting!

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Connection

When reflecting on your connection, consider how self-aware you are in body and mind. Do you have a person with whom you feel seen, heard and accepted for who you truly are?

MY SCORE /10

Connection advice

- cultivating self awareness, **self compassion** and self acceptance is really helpful, and journalling is a great practice to support this
- **nourish** yourself every day, what brings you joy?
- cultivate **relationships** with those that nourish you, write a letter, make a date to meet a friend
- reflect on whether your **phone** use affects your interactions
- **join** those with similar interests e.g. sing in a choir
- **give back** e.g. volunteer for a charity close to your heart, express your gratitude to others.

I'M ALREADY DOING THIS

I'D LIKE TO TRY



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Making your plan

When making your plan, start with the areas where you have most to gain.

MY AREAS WITH THE LOWEST SCORES

Making a plan

- **start small** - choose 3 things to try e.g.
  - add in some nuts & seeds to my meals
  - leave my phone downstairs at bedtime
  - use a meditation app for 5 mins a day
- **think about what you need to succeed**
  - block out some time in your diary for crafting
  - add in a habit to an existing one e.g. some squats while the kettle boils for your morning drink
  - ask a friend to join you for a walk for the accountability
- **note your successes**, write them down or share them
- **review** your scores and plan **regularly**
- **build** on your plan, adding in other things you'd like to try.

MY MOTIVATION



MY THREE STEP PLAN

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Will it help?

These measures can and do support symptoms at menopause, whether or not we are also using HRT or non-hormonal treatments. They also support long-term health and wellbeing, for the future you.

No-one has a perfect lifestyle, remember this is a toolkit of things you **could** try.

You don't need to do them all, you don't need to do them every day.

I hope they help you as much as they help me,
Warmly,

Sam

