

Menopause

411

Natural ways and supplementation
to balance hormones —
so you feel fantastic!





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About our sponsor

At Natural Health International (NHI), clinical research, quality, organic and purity are words that they live by. NHI dedicated 15 years of research that included double blind placebo controlled clinical trials, as well as pharmacology and safety studies to develop the **Femmenessence** line to support hormone balance for women at all stages of life. That is why NHI offers three different solutions: MacaHarmony for the fertility years, MacaLife for perimenopause and MacaPause for postmenopause, each with a specific maca blend that is concentrated and bio-available.

Femmenessence is the first herbal supplement to ever demonstrate statistically significant effects in hormones in peri- and postmenopausal women. However, instead of introducing hormones into the body, **Femmenessence** supports the body's own production of hormones by nourishing the HPA (Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal) Axis, thereby addressing the root cause and creating true hormone balance.

www.Femmenessence.com



Maca-GO (found only in Femmenessence)

NHI's groundbreaking research on maca is the first to highlight that there are in fact 13 different types of maca, that are different colors, DNA and most importantly elicit different physiological effects in men and women. NHI's clinical research on Maca-GO confirms it has the highest success rate and biggest reduction in menopausal symptoms of any herbal supplement and positively impacted heart, bone and mental health because of its impact on hormones.

What comes to mind when you think of menopause? All too often, women instantly imagine all kinds of unpleasant symptoms, from night sweats and hot flashes, to mood swings, weight gain and low libido. It's no surprise that so many women find themselves dreading "the change."

But menopause doesn't have to be a negative experience. Thanks to natural solutions—along with a healthy dose of evolved thinking when it comes to women's bodies—this season of life can be a manageable and even beautiful one.

The first step is understanding that hormones play the most important role and are the root cause of menopausal symptoms and the major declines in heart, bone and mental health that happen at menopause because of the loss of hormones. Unless you are addressing hormone imbalance you are only putting a band-aid on the symptoms—and you are not addressing any of the other health issues at all. This guide will help you not only to build that foundation of knowledge, but also to manage those symptoms with hormone-balancing supplements, lifestyle and dietary choices.

Understanding hormones

The key to understanding menopause begins with a tiny, pearl-sized area of the brain called the hypothalamus. Think of the hypothalamus as the body's command central for hormones, responsible for instructing glands to release the right balance of hormones to keep body temperature, thirst and hunger, blood pressure, heartbeat, fat metabolism and even emotions and sex drive in balance.

When you're younger, the hypothalamus sends a message each month to the pituitary gland to produce the hormones needed to release an egg. This, in turn, signals the ovaries to produce estrogen and progesterone to support fertilization and growth.

But, like many things, the hypothalamus slows with age. Over time, it becomes less and less capable of managing these signals, and hormone production slows. As hormone levels start to decline, the body enters a phase called perimenopause.



What is perimenopause?

Perimenopause is the stage leading up to your last period. This phase can last about 10 years, and starts when estrogen and progesterone production decline. In addition, women's hormones begin to fluctuate more often, making some women feel like they are on a "hormonal roller coaster." For a lucky 15 percent of women, perimenopause and menopause cause no symptoms at all. But for most, symptoms can start as early as age 40. The good news is that these symptoms can be managed and minimized with natural solutions, from smart supplementation to healthy lifestyle choices, and this starts with revitalizing the hypothalamus, or command central for hormones.

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Age when most women start feeling symptoms

Common symptoms include:

A change in periods: As hormone production slows, women in perimenopause may experience irregular periods and spotting. This is often one of the first signs of perimenopause. You could have a heavier or longer period one month, and a shorter and lighter period another month. You could start skipping periods. This is all normal during perimenopause.

Hot flashes: This is a classic symptom of "the change," but it can actually begin much sooner than the onset of menopause. Experts believe hot flashes are caused by declining estrogen levels, which begins in perimenopause. In fact, 70 percent of women squarely in perimenopause experience hot flashes.

Brain fog: Feeling forgetful? Your premature "senior moment" may actually have to do with the body's slightly lower estrogen levels during perimenopause. Plus, chronic stress can only make matters worse because it wears on the adrenal gland. The result? Insomnia, headaches, fatigue, anxiety, trouble concentrating and even depression.

Trouble sleeping: Perimenopausal women experience low progesterone, high cortisol demands (thanks to everyday stressors) and even a disturbance in melatonin, the hormone responsible for regulating sleep and wake cycles—not exactly conducive to quality shut-eye.





Many women don't know that menopause is defined as the one day twelve months after your last cycle

What is postmenopause?

Once you haven't had your period for one whole year, you've officially reached menopause. But what many women don't know is menopause really is just that day twelve months after your last cycle. The hormone fluctuations leading up to it are perimenopause and loss of hormones after it are postmenopause. So postmenopause is actually the entire stage of life after menopause. Most women reach this stage around age 50. This is the time when the body starts to rapidly lose its estrogen production. The experience is different for every woman—genetics, diet and lifestyle choices all play a part—but some of the most common symptoms include:



Hot flashes and night sweats: Hot flashes and night sweats (their nocturnal counterparts) are a direct result of lower estrogen levels and a hallmark symptom of postmenopause. A hot flash can last anywhere from 30 seconds to 10 minutes, and typically includes a sudden rush of heat, flushing of the face and neck, reddening of the skin, and sweating. It's also not uncommon to feel cold immediately following a hot flash.



Trouble sleeping: Whether it's from night sweats, a cortisol imbalance, low melatonin production or a circadian rhythm imbalance, many women find it hard to log quality Zs during this time.



Change in libido: Postmenopause is often associated with a diminishing libido and vaginal dryness—and for many women, that's true. Less commonly, some women may find that they're more interested in sex.



Mood swings: As if getting older and everything that entails financially, physically and emotionally wasn't enough! Add to that the major drop in hormones, the declining function of our hypothalamus and our plummeting ability to cope with stress and mood swings.

Supporting your hormones

Diet and nutrition

One of the most important tips: Get enough protein. Amino acids from protein are the building blocks of hormones. Protein can be sourced from foods such as organic eggs, tofu, quinoa, yogurt, nuts, whey, hemp or pea protein powders, or animal protein such as grass-fed red meat, organic chicken and wild fish. Each meal should include a portion of protein the size of the palm of your hand and each snack a portion of protein about a third of that.

Recommended protein intake	0.8 – 1.0 grams per kg of body weight per day
Athletes, Postmenopausal women or individuals with Osteoporosis	1.5 grams per kg of body weight per day.

Also focus on drinking less alcohol.

Like many things, alcohol reduces our body's function, including hormones.



Lifestyle and environment

Reduce stress. Stress, whether physical or emotional, disrupts our adrenal glands and overall hormone balance. Meditation and breathing exercises are great techniques that help to reduce stress. Taking just 15 minutes in the morning and before bed to practice therapeutic breathing and relaxation techniques can significantly reduce stress levels. Individuals who routinely practice meditation experience dramatic decreases in stress, mood stabilization, better sleep and more energy. Research shows that these stress-reduction techniques benefit the immune and endocrine systems as well.

Clean up your personal care routine. Make sure you choose personal care items with no endocrine disruptors or hormone mimicking substances such as xeno-estrogens.

Get a Massage: Physical touch or massage is a key factor for maintaining hormonal health. Oxytocin, which stimulates growth hormone, is released during orgasm, labor and breastfeeding, but also through safe touch, such as massage. Therefore, regular massage should not be seen as a luxury, but rather as a health necessity. Additionally, sexual activity is important and it is recommended that men and women have physical, sexual intimacy at least once per week to keep hormone levels active.

Sleep: Sleep recharges the brain and allows the body to relax and heal. During sleep, blood supply to the muscles is increased, which helps to repair muscle while metabolic activity is at its lowest. Growth hormone peaks during deep sleep, which allows for tissue growth and repair. Proper immune response occurs during adequate and regular sleep. Proper, restful sleep is paramount, since chronic insomnia and poor sleep can reduce levels of testosterone by 40 percent.

Supplements: Hormonal imbalance is the root cause of all of the symptoms experienced during peri and postmenopause. Because menopausal supplement science is advancing, there is now science on supplements that are focused on balancing hormones rather than just alleviating the symptoms. In fact, recent research on hormone-balancing

ingredient Maca-GO showed the highest success rates of any natural product – 84 percent! New science on specific types of maca focused on women and the hypothalamus has for the first time demonstrated, in published clinical trials, statistically significant effects on hormones in peri and postmenopausal women.



Learn more about how there are 13 different types of maca and clinical research on Maca-GO, found only in Femmenessence.

Exercise: Short, high-intensity, weight bearing exercise has been shown to increase the body's production of hormones (not to mention the fact that it's an excellent stress reliever!).



Your customized menopausal-symptom relief plan

Kick symptoms to the curb with a holistic relief plan.

Symptom: Hot Flashes

Why is this happening? Women's health experts say hot flashes are probably caused by radical dips in estrogen.

1. Balance hormones: Clinical trials on specific combinations of concentrated gelatinized maca (read more about Maca-GO, found only in Femmenessence, in our About Our Sponsor section) led to hormonal balance in peri and postmenopausal women. In these studies, 17 out of 20 women experienced a reduction in their symptoms, with the strongest reduction in hot flashes and night sweats.

2. Diet and nutrition: New research shows that increasing phytoestrogen intake can decrease hot flashes. So load up on phytoestrogen-rich plant foods such as soy, oats, almonds, flax seeds and lentils. And, try to eat smaller meals throughout the day. Large meals can raise body temperature, which can up your chance of getting a hot flash.

3. Lifestyle and environment: Avoid caffeine, alcohol and spicy foods, which are all known to increase the likelihood of hot flashes

4. Exercise and movement: Sweat out your hot flashes. New research shows that sedentary women are 28 percent more likely than active women to have severe menopausal symptoms. In fact, a new study appearing in *Menopause* found that 30 minutes of exercise twice a week cuts hot flash severity. If that's not reason enough, additional research published in *Menopause* found that hot flashes are more common for women who gain weight, and a higher body mass can mean a higher chance of night sweats and hot flashes.

You're not alone. Hot flashes are one of the most common menopausal symptoms, affecting as much as 85 percent of Western women.





Symptom: Poor Sleep

Why is this happening? Poor sleep is one of the earliest signs of perimenopause. When the ovaries cut back on producing progesterone, a natural sedative, and the hypothalamus can't keep up with getting other parts of the body to produce more progesterone, it can be hard to get to sleep. This loss of progesterone is also one of the major reasons your cardiovascular disease risk increases. Progesterone has a relaxing function that helps protect the heart, in case of stroke or heart attack. Plus, the adrenal glands (two energizing glands that sit atop the kidneys) might be exhausted from years of churning out cortisol and adrenaline, the body's main stress hormones. This is most often seen when we have no energy during the day but then can't sleep at night! And the most important—the pituitary gland (again controlled by the Hypothalamus ... yes there is a theme here) declines in functionality resulting in declining production of melatonin—the key hormone for sleep and our circadian rhythm.

1. Balance hormones: The HPA axis is the body's central stress response system and is critical for a lot of reasons, including helping the body to regulate and balance hormonal production. Support it by using targeted maca products that are aimed at hormonal issues.

(Learn more about Maca-GO on page 2.)

2. Diet and nutrition: Take a good look at your diet. Stabilizing your blood sugar is key to healthy adrenals. Go easy on sweets and other refined carbs, stop skipping meals and eat plenty of protein (a natural blood glucose stabilizer). According to research coming out of the University of Edinburgh, magnesium can help the body stay in sync with day and night rhythms. So stock up on foods high in this nutrient such as dark leafy greens, nuts and whole grains.

3. Lifestyle and environment: Avoid caffeine, electronics at bedtime, stressors (if possible!) and high-sugar foods. Think your adrenals might be to blame for your restless nights? Get a simple Adrenal Stress Index saliva test from your doctor.

4. Exercise and movement: Tire yourself out. It makes sense that if you're tired at bedtime, you might have a better night's sleep. But recent research shows that even moderate exercise can yield improvements in sleep quality and insomnia among peri- and postmenopausal women. Consider choosing a weight bearing exercise, which can also help build bone mass that which can diminish with age.



Symptom: Brain Fog

Why is this happening? Forgetfulness and difficulty concentrating often corresponds with a dip in estrogen, which impacts activity in the hippocampus (the region of the brain responsible for memory processing). And it's very common. A large study from the University of California, which examined more than 2,000 women between the ages of 42 and 52, found that most of them (60 percent) suffered memory and mental-processing problems. The good news? According to the study, brain fog tends to dissipate after menopause.

1. Balance hormones: Information within the brain is transmitted between neurons and estrogen impacts the connection between neurons. Low levels of estrogen decreases the connections. Research on Maca-GO supported estrogen levels and these connections.

2. Diet and nutrition: Avoid sugar and "empty" carbs such as white bread, pasta and white rice, which are metabolized quickly causing blood sugar to spike and drop—a common cause of brain fog. Choose: berries. Rich in antioxidants, berries, may help support cognition as you age, according to one study. The scientists single out blueberries, blackberries and strawberries, but antioxidants abound in all kinds of fruits and veggies, from sweet potatoes to oranges, whole grains, beans and fish. Omega-3 fatty acids, also prevalent in fish, are known brain-boosters.

3. Exercise and movement: We used to think that the amount of brain cells we were born with was what we had and we lose them gradually or quickly depending on how much damage we do to our brain through things like alcohol, concussion, bad diet and much more. However, studies have shown that people even in their 80s can grow new brain cells! What is the primary way to do that? Exercise!

Symptom: Mood Swings

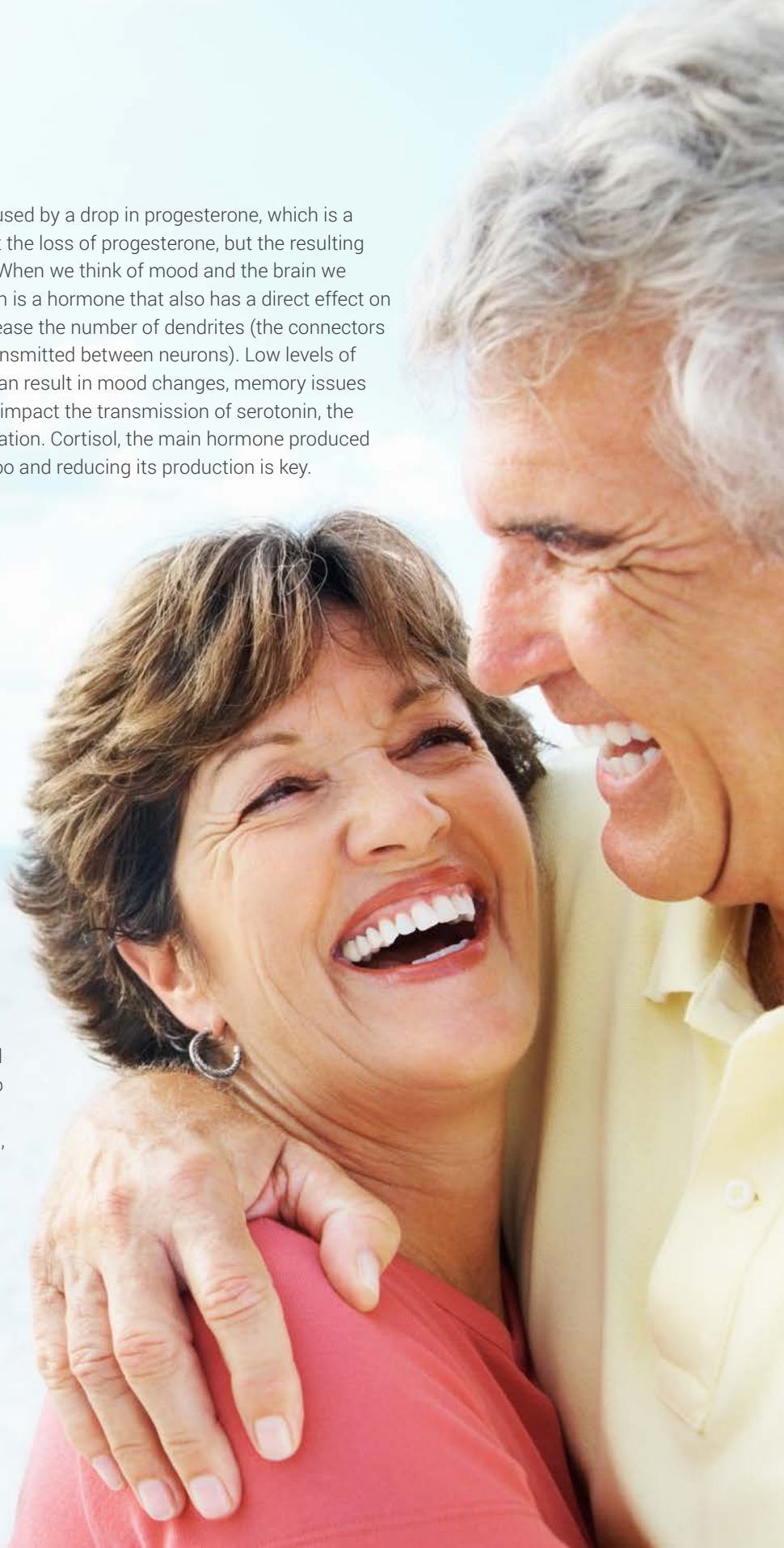
Why is this happening? Mood swings can be caused by a drop in progesterone, which is a mood regulator and sedative, however it isn't just the loss of progesterone, but the resulting imbalance between estrogen and progesterone. When we think of mood and the brain we generally think about neurotransmitters. Estrogen is a hormone that also has a direct effect on neurotransmitters. One of its functions is to increase the number of dendrites (the connectors that impact the amount of information that is transmitted between neurons). Low levels of estrogen mean fewer connection points, which can result in mood changes, memory issues and brain fog. Thus, low levels of estrogen could impact the transmission of serotonin, the most important neurotransmitter for mood regulation. Cortisol, the main hormone produced during stress, has a myriad of effects on mood too and reducing its production is key.

1. Balance hormones. Research on Maca-GO shows that it can help balance cortisol, estrogen and progesterone.

2. Diet and nutrition: One recent study linked omega-3 fatty acids with a 20 percent reduction in anxiety. So reach for foods rich in this beneficial fat such as salmon, walnuts or chia seeds. Avoid: Stress eating. Stress is known to spike blood sugar on its own, and reaching for a donut or ice cream for comfort will only cause more spikes and crashes.

3. Lifestyle and environment: Take a breather. Everyone knows that meditation can work wonders for stress and anxiety. But did you know that a new report also says meditation can be a natural alternative to hormone therapy? Researchers from Sweden enlisted postmenopausal women and trained them to relax before and during the onset of menopausal symptoms. What they found was that those who meditated cut their hot flash frequency in half during the three-month trial. So find your mantra, and get to meditating.

4. Exercise and movement: Exercise really can make you happy! Research shows that fitness releases endorphins, which can have a significant impact on mood.



Symptom: **Low Libido**

Why is this happening? During perimenopause, the ovaries produce lower levels of estrogen, progesterone and testosterone, leaving the adrenal glands to try to make up the difference. When they're overtaxed like this, they will produce stress hormones over sex hormones.

- 1. Balance hormones:** Support the HPA axis with supplementation to reinvigorate all of these hormones.
- 2. Lifestyle and environment:** Avoid more than one cocktail an hour, which can impact libido.
- 3. Diet and nutrition:** Common aphrodisiacs include oysters, persimmons, ambrosia, lobster, cinnamon, saffron and nutmeg. Maca is also known to boost sex drive.

Suffering From Dryness?

Because vaginal tissue depends on estrogen to remain moist and elastic, menopause's hormonal nosedive often means tissue becomes thinner and drier. Painful sex is just one possible result; women suffering from dryness can also be prone to yeast and urinary infections. Plain coconut oil applied topically, or vitamin E vaginal suppositories, can act as natural lubricants.



Symptom: **Bone Loss**

Why is this happening? Within the first three to five years of peri-menopause a woman loses on average 7 percent to 10 percent of her bone density. Osteoporosis is a chronic, progressive "lifestyle disease" that affects millions of Americans, particularly women. It is estimated that anywhere between 20 percent and 50 percent of postmenopausal women are affected by low bone density. The major causes relate to old age, hereditary bone health, low body weight (less than 127 pounds), being a current smoker and/or being on steroid therapy. Other risk factors include suboptimal nutrition (i.e. Standard American Diet), low hormone production, excess alcohol and lack of exercise.

1. Balance hormones: The main reason for bone density loss during menopause is that hormone production dramatically declines. Hormones are one of the most important aspects of bone health, particularly growth hormone, estrogen, progesterone and testosterone. Additionally, often forgotten in bone health protocols is thyroid production, as hyperthyroidism or overproduction inhibits bone building and accelerates bone loss increasing the risk for osteoporosis. Clinical research on Maca-GO has seen strong results on bone density and hormones in postmenopausal women.

The three stages of bone health

Stage 1 is the first 25 years of life when you build the strongest, most dense bones and minimize any actions that may compromise bone building.

Stage 2 is from 26 years of age to menopause, where you take steps to avoid the breakdown of bone.

Stage 3 is postmenopause, which is generally over 50 years of age, where you support bone growth and limit bone loss.



How specific hormones affect bone health

Estrogen: Bone is a living tissue and scientists believe that on average people replace their bone once every ten years. This continual process of your body replacing old bone with new bone is conducted by cells called osteoclasts, which dissolve old bone, and osteoblast cells that build new bone. Estrogen is the hormone which controls the action of osteoclast cells, thus slowing bone loss.

Progesterone and testosterone: In this bone-rebuilding process, osteoblast cells are responsible for the building of new bone. Progesterone and testosterone both increase the action of osteoblast cells, increasing the rate at which you build new bone.

Thyroid hormones: When the thyroid gland is overactive, it can put us at risk for low bone-mineral density. Also, people with low thyroid function who take prescription medication for thyroid hormone can be at risk for osteopenia and osteoporosis when the dose is too high. Too many circulating thyroid hormones, known as thyrotoxicosis, cause bones to age faster.

Lifestyle and environment: Because osteoporosis is a lifestyle disease, our environment can have a significant impact on our health – positively or negatively. Be sure to manage stress (exercise, meditation, good sleep), limit alcohol consumption, mineralize your water and carefully monitor your intake of pharmaceutical drugs.

Exercise and movement: You've heard the saying, "Move it or lose it." Well, that's right! As a society, we have become more sedentary and thus our muscles, bones and joints have suffered the consequences. Engaging in regular exercise is necessary for all aspects of health, including bone health. Also be sure to maintain a healthy body weight, fit in weight bearing exercises three days per week and get regular massages.

Diet and nutrition: The average American adult falls short in consuming the key vitamins and minerals the body requires to properly function. The Standard American Diet (SAD), is full of processed foods, sugar and additives, while depleted of quality fats, protein and carbohydrates. As a result, the body struggles to properly regenerate bones and regulate hormones. Women require the following vitamins and minerals for bone health:

Vitamin/Mineral	Amount per day	Source
Calcium	500-1200mg	Organic green leafy vegetables, sardines, molasses, dairy, supplementation
Magnesium	500mg	Organic green leafy vegetables, wheat bran, brewer's yeast, supplementation
Zinc	15mg	Oysters, grass-fed red meat, organic chicken, fish, wheat germ, supplementation
Copper	2mg	Liver, oysters, nuts, chocolate, seeds, shellfish, supplementation
Manganese	2mg	Pineapple, raspberries, beans, tomatoes, green leafy vegetables, supplementation
Vitamin D	1000-2000IU	15-20 minutes of sun, wild fish - sardines, mackerel and salmon, supplementation
Vitamin K	90-120mcg	Chlorophyll, broccoli, cabbage, kelp, olive oil, canola oil, supplementation
B-12	400-800mcg	Grass-fed red meat, shellfish, liver, cheese, spirulina, kelp, supplementation

