

- Let's get the basics right first
- We've grown up thinking that fat is bad
- The first port of call for fat is to create our hormones
- We use saturated fats to make sex hormones
- We need mono and polyunsaturated fat to support our heart health so a very low-fat diet during perimenopause and menopause is really not going to help you because if your sex hormones are already declining and you're not giving your body the tools it needs to make more then of course you're going to be feeling rubbish
- Firstly we need to look at the macros. Let's get the macro balance right. By that Jackie mean the carbs, the fats and the proteins
- We need all of them
- We need to remember that carbohydrates are our primary source of energy
- The right kinds of carbohydrates (complex carbohydrates) brown stuff (brown bread, rice and pasta) are packed with fibre which are going to support digestion
- Fruit and vegetables are carbohydrates too and they are packed with so many menopause-friendly vitamins and minerals that will help to keep us fit and strong and play a role in managing things like energy levels, mood and motivation and to a degree our hormone balance as well
- We need to eat enough protein. We're made of protein. We need it for growth and repair of cells. If you're recovering from illness, injury or surgery for example, protein is key
- We also need it because our skin, hair and nails are all made of protein
- If you're worried about the consistency of your skin changing, are you getting enough protein?
- If your nails are starting to feel weak, it might not just be the oestrogen - are you getting enough protein?
- We need protein for strong bones and muscles because women can lose up to 40% of muscle mass by the time they have gone through menopause
- We use the amino acids found in protein to create neurotransmitters that govern things like mood and memory and motivation which lots of those are real issues for women in midlife

- Are you giving your body the tools it needs to do the job it has to do - particularly during this phase when everything has gone a bit haywire because of your hormones
- An idea of a protein rich meal: Lots of animal protein - the obvious ones the meat, fish, eggs for example. Plant proteins are fantastic. Soy is a great one and quinoa as well. Both of those are what we would call complete proteins as they contain all of the essential amino acids in one easy package just like meat or fish or eggs which means you don't have to work so hard to get everything you need
- And then of course there's things like pulses, lentils, chickpeas, houmous, beans, nuts and seeds which are all great sources of protein
- For breakfast, you can add lots of lovely nuts and seeds to your porridge for example or to a smoothie. You can use a nut butter on toast
- It's not about making radical changes. It's about making the tweaks - e.g. wholemeal toast with a nut butter, cottage cheese or an egg which gives you that protein
- Aim for protein with every meal and snack - that's what will keep you going
- For lunch and dinner, you want a fist size of protein - e.g. a chicken breast, a salmon steak or a couple of big dollops of houmous or quinoa
- The protein should be about a quarter of the meal, and then you don't need the starch to be much more than that unless you have a really physically active job - i.e. a fist size of rice, potatoes or pasta is really ample
- The rest of the plate should be full of vegetables with all of that lovely fibre and supportive vitamins and minerals
- Just visualise your plate with these 4 quarters and if you're looking to manage your weight, you might not need the extra starch in the evening, so you could just make 75% of the meal instead
- It's just about getting the balance right which is great because it will balance your blood sugar which will lead to hormone balance and all of those different things you're having are going to be super menopause friendly without you having to think very hard because we're busy and we have a lot on

- One of the challenges for weight loss that many women face is that if they have been yo-yo dieting for years - their metabolism will be very confused
- One of the things that can work well for women in midlife is looking at time-restricted eating (the 16:8) where you eat sensibly within an eight hour window, and then you fast for 16 hours and hopefully a good chunk of that will be when you're asleep
- So this might mean that you have breakfast a bit later and the main meal a bit earlier
- This usually means that you eat a bit less because it's hard to fit big meals into a shorter time period because you find you're not so hungry
- It supports your digestion as well as giving it some relief. For women that find that they are struggling with issues like bloating, they often find that it can ease things back a bit
- Sugar is one of the main triggers, and once you get the sugar craving - it's very difficult to stop
- Once you're on the seesaw of sugar it spikes and crashes the blood sugar, it's very difficult to get off
- Too much carbohydrate and refined sugar is likely to be the main culprit in weight management
- If you can keep your blood sugar nice and balanced, you don't get the same cravings
- You need to be getting to meals hungry but not desperate. If you do that, your brain will make the right choice. If you don't, your hormones will take over
- Caffeine and alcohol are also triggers and will interfere with the insulin response
- When your blood sugars are high from too much sugar, caffeine or alcohol they will trigger the insulin response
- Insulin's job is to clean out all of that stuff out of the blood and send it to the liver to be stored and it's there that the trouble takes place because if the liver is full the excess sugar will be stored as fat

- And because it's an emergency response, it doesn't carefully calculate how to get you back to the nice narrow band where you should be. It hoovers up the lot and in a short space of time, your blood sugars crash and that's when you're feeling tired, irritable, shaky, headachy, dizzy and absolutely desperate for something
- And so the stress hormones come out to deal with that because technically it's dangerous to have low blood sugar as sugar is our primary source of energy and they trigger the cravings, and that's when you end up with the see-saw
- Stress hormones will interfere with your sex hormone
- Our adrenal glands produce a weak form of oestrogen post-menopause and the trouble is, they also produce the stress hormone and because the stress response is technically a life-saving response, they'll always prioritise that first
- So if you're constantly stressed, the adrenal glands won't have any space to produce oestrogen
- So that's one way that caffeine and alcohol can make your symptoms worse because they are triggering those stress hormones
- There's also a lot of research on the impact of alcohol and caffeine on hot flushes for example. Red wine in particular
- If your symptoms are very bad then it wouldn't do any harm to reduce the refined sugar and cut out the alcohol
- You need to be careful reducing caffeine because you don't want to end up feeling really awful because caffeine is so addictive if you go cold turkey, it will be really hard and if you're already struggling with menopause symptoms, then it's not a sensible thing to do
- Try that for a couple of weeks and see what difference it makes
- Getting a balanced diet is actually quite hard work especially eating seasonal produce which is higher in nutrients, which is why frozen vegetables can be a very good choice
- We also need to recognise that our lifestyle really affects our ability to absorb nutrients - e.g. both coffee and tea block the absorption of iron, the tannins in tea affect the absorption of calcium. Alcohol massively depletes B Vitamins and women need B vitamins. We are so often low in them - particularly B12 and low levels of B12 can affect concentration and memory and lead to depression

- Most of us will probably benefit from a good quality multivitamin and mineral
- If you have a medical condition, you need to check with your doctor first
- Just because something is natural doesn't make it safe
- It's about getting the balance right and getting the right advice. Seek advice from a health professional
- In terms of bone health, calcium is important, but we need Vitamin D to absorb calcium
- With a multivitamin, you'll probably get about 400 IU of vitamin D, take 1000 on top of that
- Dairy is the quickest and easiest source of calcium, but leafy green veg contains twice as much calcium as 100g of milk and it's got the advantage of magnesium, Vitamin K, vitamin C which are all important for bones. Sardines are also good
- Omega 3 is important for shiny hair and healthy skin. Found in nuts and seeds like flaxseeds
- 2 tips for sleep:
  - Balance your blood sugar
  - If you struggle to switch off, then it's all about magnesium which is our ignition key for energy. It calms the nervous system and regulates the body's response to stress.
- Final top tips:
  - Eat more protein
  - Boost the magnesium
  - Take some vitamin D
  - 2 tablespoons of ground flaxseed at breakfast or a smoothie every morning
  - Factor sardines into your diet once a week or make sardine fish cakes
  - Be kind to yourself