

# Ask Leyla: Help! Why can't I lose weight post-menopause?



**Q:** Any tips for losing weight post-menopause? I eat a healthy diet (salmon 3-4 times a week; no white flour/sugars) and exercise, but cannot lose ten pounds. I never had a weight issue in my entire life until now!

**A:** Here's the thing about menopause. Everything we did diet-wise *before* menopause doesn't necessarily continue to work afterwards. The biggest complaint I hear is "I never gained weight around my midsection before. Now I have a belly!"

It could very well be the decline in hormones that causes a degree of metabolic resistance to weight loss. It would be a good idea to get your thyroid levels checked as well as DHEA and ferritin.

Adrenal stress is another reason for metabolic resistance to weight loss. A salivary cortisol test can show if stress hormone levels are too high. Adrenals can be soothed with adaptogens such as ashwagandha, L-theanine and magnolia. Regulating circadian rhythms with structured sleep-wake cycles is key in helping to maintain a healthy weight.

While I agree you're on a very healthy diet if you're eating salmon and avoiding refined carbohydrates, we do become more carbohydrate intolerant as we get older. I know it feels like some kind of cosmic punishment, but there it is. So we need to go a little further down in the carbohydrate department. Essentially, I'm talking about the avoidance of grains, even whole grains. This food group has the highest amounts of carbohydrates, and because they can cause spikes in blood sugar and subsequent insulin levels—especially as we get older—it keeps metabolism in perpetual fat storage mode.

In addition, keep your fruit intake limited to low glycemic fruits such as berries, grapefruit, plums, kiwi, and Granny Smith apples (the green one). It's best to avoid bananas and grapes, or at least choose them less frequently. And keep away from any juices and all-fruit smoothies.

You should eat more vegetables than fruit. Limit your starchier vegetables such as potatoes (yes, even sweet potatoes), peas and corn. Eat more greens, salads and cruciferous veggies.

Avoid artificial sweeteners like the plague (or any sweeteners for that matter). Most will cause spikes in blood sugar and insulin contributing to metabolic abnormalities. An exception might be xylitol, but there's a threshold where xylitol

can have a laxative effect—user beware.

The objective is to keep insulin levels low so the fat-burning hormone glucagon can do its job. Then you can say goodbye to the last ten pounds.

To your health!

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