

The 3-Pillar Menopause Nutrition Cheat Sheet

Your Quick-Reference Guide to Hormone Balance, Bone Health & Metabolic Support

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Why These 3 Pillars?

During menopause, your body's nutritional needs fundamentally change. The same diet that worked at 35 no longer serves you at 50. This cheat sheet focuses on the three most critical nutritional pillars that directly address the metabolic and hormonal shifts of menopause:

Pillar 1: Calcium + Vitamin D (bone health & metabolic support)

Pillar 2: Vegetables Over Fruit (hormone balance & inflammation reduction)

Pillar 3: Protein at Every Meal (muscle preservation & blood sugar stability)

Master these three pillars, and you'll support your body through this transition with energy, strength, and hormonal balance.

PILLAR 1: Calcium + Vitamin D

Bone Health & Metabolic Foundation

Why This Matters During Menopause

The Problem:

- Estrogen protects bone density—when it drops, bone loss accelerates
- Women can lose up to 20% of bone density in the 5-7 years after menopause
- 1 in 2 women over 50 will experience an osteoporosis-related fracture
- Calcium and vitamin D also support muscle function, mood, and metabolic health

The Solution: Strategic calcium and vitamin D intake to maintain bone density, support muscle function, and optimize metabolism.

Daily Targets

Calcium: 1,200 mg daily

Vitamin D: 600-800 IU daily (some women need 1,000-2,000 IU—ask your doctor)

Best Food Sources

CALCIUM-RICH FOODS

Dairy & Alternatives (if tolerated):

- Plain Greek yogurt (1 cup): 300 mg
- Milk (1 cup): 300 mg
- Cheese, cheddar (1.5 oz): 300 mg
- Cottage cheese (1 cup): 125 mg
- Fortified almond milk (1 cup): 450 mg
- Fortified oat milk (1 cup): 350 mg

Leafy Greens:

- Collard greens, cooked (1 cup): 268 mg
- Kale, cooked (1 cup): 177 mg
- Bok choy, cooked (1 cup): 158 mg
- Turnip greens, cooked (1 cup): 197 mg

Fish & Seafood:

- Sardines with bones (3 oz): 325 mg
- Canned salmon with bones (3 oz): 181 mg

Other Sources:

- Tofu, calcium-set (1/2 cup): 253 mg
- White beans (1 cup): 161 mg
- Almonds (1/4 cup): 96 mg
- Figs, dried (5 figs): 68 mg
- Orange, medium: 60 mg

VITAMIN D SOURCES

Food Sources:

- Salmon, wild (3.5 oz): 600-1,000 IU
- Sardines (3.5 oz): 300 IU
- Mackerel (3.5 oz): 360 IU

- Fortified milk (1 cup): 100 IU
- Fortified orange juice (1 cup): 100 IU
- Egg yolks (1 large): 40 IU
- Mushrooms exposed to UV light (1 cup): 400 IU

Non-Food Sources:

- Sunlight exposure: 10-30 minutes midday sun on arms/legs, 3x/week
- Vitamin D3 supplement: Discuss dosage with doctor (many women need 1,000-2,000 IU)

Sample Daily Meal Plan (Meeting Calcium Goal)

Breakfast: Greek yogurt (300 mg) + 1/4 cup almonds (96 mg) = **396 mg**

Lunch: Kale salad with sardines (177 + 325 mg) = **502 mg**

Snack: Fortified almond milk latte (450 mg) or Karviva (calcium from greens)

Dinner: Salmon (calcium + vitamin D) + bok choy (158 mg) = **158 mg**

TOTAL: ~1,200 mg

Absorption Tips

DO:

- Spread calcium intake throughout day (body absorbs max 500 mg at once)
- Take vitamin D with fat-containing meal (it's fat-soluble)
- Get regular weight-bearing exercise (walking, strength training)
- Get adequate vitamin K (from leafy greens) for bone building

DON'T:

- Take calcium and iron supplements together (compete for absorption)
 - Consume excessive caffeine (can increase calcium loss)
 - Smoke (impairs calcium absorption)
 - Consume excessive sodium (increases calcium excretion)
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PILLAR 2: Vegetables Over Fruit

Hormone Balance & Inflammation Reduction

Why This Matters During Menopause

The Problem:

- Declining estrogen makes you more insulin-resistant
- Fruit sugar (even natural) triggers bigger insulin responses than pre-menopause
- High insulin disrupts remaining hormones (cortisol, testosterone, thyroid)
- Chronic inflammation worsens all menopausal symptoms

The Solution: Prioritize nutrient-dense, low-glycemic vegetables over high-sugar fruit to stabilize blood sugar and reduce inflammation.

The 3-3-3 Fruit Rule

3 servings of vegetables BEFORE counting any fruit servings

(Most days you'll naturally stop at 1-2 fruit servings)

3 colors on your plate at every meal

(Prioritize vegetable colors over fruit colors)

3-ingredient rule for fruit

(Never eat fruit alone—always pair with protein, fat, or consume with a meal)

Daily Targets

Vegetables: 6-9 servings daily (aim for 4+ cups)

Fruit: 1-2 servings daily max (about 1 cup total)

Best Vegetable Choices

CRUCIFEROUS VEGETABLES (Hormone Support)

Support liver detoxification and estrogen metabolism:

- Broccoli (1 cup): 31 cal, 2.4g fiber, vitamin C, sulforaphane
- Cauliflower (1 cup): 25 cal, 2.1g fiber, vitamin K
- Brussels sprouts (1 cup): 38 cal, 3.3g fiber, vitamin K
- Kale (1 cup): 33 cal, 2.6g fiber, vitamins A, C, K
- Cabbage (1 cup): 22 cal, 2.2g fiber
- Bok choy (1 cup): 9 cal, 0.7g fiber, calcium

LEAFY GREENS (Nutrient Powerhouses)

High in calcium, magnesium, folate, antioxidants:

- Spinach (1 cup cooked): 41 cal, 4.3g fiber, iron, magnesium
- Swiss chard (1 cup): 35 cal, 3.7g fiber, magnesium, vitamin K
- Collard greens (1 cup): 49 cal, 5.3g fiber, calcium
- Arugula (2 cups): 10 cal, nitrates for circulation
- Romaine lettuce (2 cups): 16 cal, vitamin A

COLORFUL VEGETABLES (Anti-Inflammatory)

Rich in antioxidants that reduce inflammation:

- Bell peppers, red (1 cup): 39 cal, vitamin C
- Tomatoes (1 cup): 32 cal, lycopene
- Carrots (1 cup): 52 cal, beta-carotene
- Beets (1 cup): 58 cal, nitrates
- Purple cabbage (1 cup): 28 cal, anthocyanins
- Eggplant (1 cup): 35 cal, nasunin (antioxidant)

LOW-STARCH VEGETABLES (Blood Sugar Friendly)

Fill your plate without spiking blood sugar:

- Zucchini (1 cup): 20 cal
- Cucumber (1 cup): 16 cal
- Mushrooms (1 cup): 15 cal, vitamin D
- Celery (1 cup): 16 cal
- Asparagus (1 cup): 27 cal
- Green beans (1 cup): 44 cal

Best Fruit Choices (When You Eat Them)

EXCELLENT (Lower Glycemic, Higher Fiber)

- Berries (1 cup): 60-85 cal, 3-8g fiber, low sugar
 - Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries
- Goji berries (1/4 cup dried): 90 cal, adaptogens

- Pomegranate (1/2 cup arils): 72 cal, phytoestrogens

MODERATE (2-3x per week max)

- Apple, medium: 95 cal, 4g fiber
- Pear, medium: 100 cal, 6g fiber
- Orange, medium: 62 cal, 3g fiber
- Peach, medium: 59 cal, 2g fiber

LIMIT (Occasional only)

- Banana, medium: 105 cal, 27g sugar
- Mango (1 cup): 99 cal, 23g sugar
- Pineapple (1 cup): 82 cal, 16g sugar
- Grapes (1 cup): 104 cal, 23g sugar
- Dried fruit (very concentrated sugar)

Sample Veggie-Forward Meal Plans

BREAKFAST OPTIONS

Option 1: Vegetable omelet (spinach, mushrooms, peppers) + avocado

Option 2: Green smoothie (kale, cucumber, ginger, small handful berries, protein)

Option 3: Karviva + handful of nuts

LUNCH OPTIONS

Option 1: Large kale salad + grilled chicken + olive oil dressing

Option 2: Vegetable soup (broccoli, cauliflower, carrots) + salmon

Option 3: Stir-fried vegetables + tofu + small serving brown rice

DINNER OPTIONS

Option 1: Roasted Brussels sprouts + baked salmon + side salad

Option 2: Zucchini noodles + turkey meatballs + marinara

Option 3: Cauliflower rice + grilled chicken + roasted peppers

SNACKS

Instead of fruit: Carrots + hummus, cucumber + guacamole, cherry tomatoes + cheese

If eating fruit: Apple slices + almond butter, berries + Greek yogurt

Karviva Integration

Why Karviva Supports This Pillar:

- Vegetable-forward (kale, cucumber, sprouts, barley grass)
 - Minimal fruit (only for taste)
 - 5-8g sugar per serving (vs. 25-40g in fruit smoothies)
 - Adaptogenic herbs instead of fruit as primary ingredients
 - Perfect breakfast or snack replacement
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PILLAR 3: Protein at Every Meal

Muscle Preservation & Metabolic Support

Why This Matters During Menopause

The Problem:

- Women lose 3-8% of muscle mass per decade after 40
- Muscle mass directly determines metabolic rate
- Less muscle = slower metabolism = easier weight gain
- Protein needs INCREASE during menopause (most women don't eat enough)

The Solution: Consume adequate protein at every meal to preserve muscle mass, stabilize blood sugar, and maintain metabolic rate.

Daily Target

Minimum: 0.8g per kg of body weight

Optimal for menopause: 1.0-1.2g per kg of body weight

Active women: 1.2-1.6g per kg

Example: 150 lb (68 kg) woman needs 68-82g protein daily

Protein Distribution

DON'T: Eat 10g at breakfast, 15g at lunch, 50g at dinner

DO: Distribute evenly: 25-30g at each meal

Your body can only use ~30g of protein at once for muscle synthesis. The rest gets converted to glucose or stored as fat.

Best Protein Sources

ANIMAL PROTEINS

Poultry:

- Chicken breast (4 oz): 35g protein, 187 cal
- Turkey breast (4 oz): 34g protein, 153 cal
- Chicken thigh (4 oz): 28g protein, 232 cal

Fish & Seafood:

- Salmon, wild (4 oz): 29g protein, 206 cal, omega-3s
- Tuna (4 oz): 33g protein, 144 cal
- Shrimp (4 oz): 27g protein, 112 cal
- Sardines (3.5 oz can): 23g protein, 191 cal, calcium

Meat:

- Lean beef (4 oz): 31g protein, 200 cal, iron, B12
- Bison (4 oz): 28g protein, 166 cal
- Pork tenderloin (4 oz): 29g protein, 156 cal

Eggs & Dairy:

- Eggs, large (2): 12g protein, 143 cal
- Greek yogurt, plain (1 cup): 20g protein, 130 cal, calcium
- Cottage cheese (1 cup): 28g protein, 163 cal, calcium
- Cheese, cheddar (1 oz): 7g protein, 114 cal

PLANT PROTEINS

Legumes:

- Lentils, cooked (1 cup): 18g protein, 230 cal, fiber
- Black beans (1 cup): 15g protein, 227 cal, fiber
- Chickpeas (1 cup): 15g protein, 269 cal, fiber
- Edamame (1 cup): 17g protein, 189 cal

Soy:

- Tofu, firm (4 oz): 10g protein, 94 cal, calcium
- Tempeh (4 oz): 21g protein, 222 cal

- Natto (3.5 oz): 18g protein, vitamin K2

Nuts & Seeds:

- Almonds (1/4 cup): 8g protein, 207 cal
- Hemp seeds (3 tbsp): 10g protein, 166 cal, omega-3s
- Chia seeds (2 tbsp): 4g protein, 138 cal, fiber
- Pumpkin seeds (1/4 cup): 9g protein, 180 cal, magnesium

Whole Grains (combine with legumes for complete protein):

- Quinoa, cooked (1 cup): 8g protein, 222 cal
- Oats, cooked (1 cup): 6g protein, 166 cal

Protein Powders:

- Whey protein (1 scoop): 20-25g protein
- Pea protein (1 scoop): 15-20g protein
- Collagen peptides (1 scoop): 18g protein (supports skin, joints)

Sample Daily Meal Plan (Meeting 75g Protein Goal)

Breakfast (25g):

- 2 eggs: 12g
- 1/2 cup cottage cheese: 14g

Lunch (26g):

- Large salad with 4 oz grilled chicken: 35g
- 1/4 cup almonds: 8g

Snack (8g):

- Karviva (with some formulations containing protein)
- OR Greek yogurt, 1/2 cup: 10g

Dinner (28g):

- 4 oz salmon: 29g
- Side of quinoa: adds fiber and some protein

TOTAL: 75-80g protein

Protein Timing Strategies

Morning:

- Front-load protein to prevent afternoon cravings
- Aim for 25-30g at breakfast
- Sets metabolic tone for the day

Post-Workout:

- Consume protein within 2 hours of strength training
- Supports muscle repair and growth

Evening:

- Include protein at dinner for overnight muscle repair
- Avoid going to bed on empty stomach

Snacks:

- If eating between meals, make it protein-focused
- Prevents blood sugar crashes

Absorption Tips

DO:

- Eat protein with vitamin C (enhances iron absorption from plant proteins)
- Combine incomplete plant proteins (beans + rice, hummus + whole grain pita)
- Chew thoroughly (aids digestion)
- Stay hydrated (helps kidney function)

DON'T:

- Skip breakfast protein (sets you up for blood sugar crashes)
 - Load all protein at dinner (body can't use it all at once)
 - Neglect plant proteins (variety is beneficial)
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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

7-Day Quick-Start Meal Plan

DAY 1

Breakfast: Greek yogurt (300mg Ca, 20g protein) + berries + chia seeds

Lunch: Kale salad (177mg Ca) + sardines (325mg Ca, 23g protein)

Snack: Karviva + handful almonds (96mg Ca, 8g protein)

Dinner: Salmon (29g protein, vitamin D) + roasted broccoli + quinoa

Totals: ~1,200mg calcium, 75g protein, 6+ servings vegetables

DAY 2

Breakfast: Vegetable omelet (2 eggs = 12g protein) + avocado + spinach

Snack: Karviva

Lunch: Chicken breast (35g protein) + large mixed greens salad

Snack: Cottage cheese (14g protein, 125mg Ca) + cucumber

Dinner: Baked tofu (10g protein, 253mg Ca) + stir-fried bok choy (158mg Ca) + mushrooms

DAY 3

Breakfast: Protein smoothie: Karviva base + protein powder (20g) + handful spinach

Lunch: Turkey lettuce wraps (34g protein) + bell peppers + carrots

Snack: Hard-boiled eggs (12g protein)

Dinner: Wild salmon (29g protein) + roasted Brussels sprouts + sweet potato

DAY 4

Breakfast: Overnight oats made with fortified almond milk (450mg Ca) + hemp seeds (10g protein)

Lunch: Lentil soup (18g protein) + side salad + whole grain bread

Snack: Karviva + cheese stick (7g protein, 200mg Ca)

Dinner: Grilled chicken (35g protein) + cauliflower rice + sautéed zucchini

DAY 5

Breakfast: Scrambled eggs (12g protein) + sautéed kale (177mg Ca) + whole grain toast

Snack: Greek yogurt (20g protein, 300mg Ca)

Lunch: Tuna salad (33g protein) on mixed greens + cherry tomatoes

Snack: Karviva

Dinner: Beef stir-fry (31g protein) + broccoli + bell peppers + small serving brown rice

DAY 6

Breakfast: Karviva + 2 hard-boiled eggs (12g protein)

Lunch: Black bean bowl (15g protein) + avocado + salsa + large side salad

Snack: Almonds (8g protein, 96mg Ca) + carrots

Dinner: Baked cod + collard greens (268mg Ca) + roasted carrots

DAY 7

Breakfast: Cottage cheese bowl (28g protein, 125mg Ca) + berries + walnuts

Lunch: Chicken Caesar salad (35g protein) with romaine + Parmesan (calcium)

Snack: Karviva

Dinner: Tempeh tacos (21g protein) + cabbage slaw + guacamole

TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON CHALLENGES

"I Don't Like Vegetables"

Start small:

- Add 1 vegetable to meals you already eat
- Roast vegetables (brings out natural sweetness)
- Blend into smoothies (kale, cucumber, spinach)
- Try Karviva (vegetables in convenient form)

Flavor boosters:

- Garlic, lemon, herbs, spices
- Olive oil, tahini, miso
- Nutritional yeast (cheesy flavor)

"I'm Always Hungry"

Check these:

- Are you getting 25-30g protein at EVERY meal?
- Are you eating enough fat? (avocado, nuts, olive oil)
- Are you eating enough fiber? (vegetables, not just fruit)
- Is your fruit intake too high? (blood sugar crashes create hunger)

"I Can't Digest Dairy"

Calcium alternatives:

- Fortified plant milks (check label: 300-450mg per cup)
- Leafy greens (collards, kale, bok choy)
- Canned fish with bones (sardines, salmon)
- Tofu (calcium-set)
- Supplement if needed (calcium citrate better absorbed than carbonate)

"I'm Vegetarian/Vegan"

Protein strategies:

- Combine legumes + grains for complete protein
- Use protein powder (pea, hemp, soy)
- Eat tempeh, tofu, edamame regularly
- Include nuts and seeds daily
- Track protein to ensure adequate intake

Calcium strategies:

- Fortified plant milks (almond, oat, soy)
- Tofu (calcium-set)
- Leafy greens (steam or sauté to increase absorption)
- Supplement vitamin D (harder to get from plant foods)

TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS

Weekly Checklist

Print this and post on your fridge:

PILLAR 1: Calcium + Vitamin D Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

Did I get 1,200mg calcium today?

Did I get vitamin D (food, sun, or supplement)?

PILLAR 2: Vegetables Over Fruit Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

Did I eat 6+ servings of vegetables?

Did I limit fruit to 1-2 servings?

PILLAR 3: Protein at Every Meal Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

Did I eat 25-30g protein at breakfast?

Did I eat 25-30g protein at lunch?
Did I eat 25-30g protein at dinner?

Symptom Tracker

Track these weekly to see progress:

Energy: (1-10 scale)

Sleep Quality: (1-10 scale)

Hot Flash Frequency: (# per day)

Mood Stability: (1-10 scale)

Cravings: (1-10 scale, 1 = none)

Joint Pain: (1-10 scale, 1 = none)

Mental Clarity: (1-10 scale)

Most women notice improvements within 2-4 weeks.

KARVIVA INTEGRATION GUIDE

How Karviva Supports All 3 Pillars

Pillar 1 (Calcium + Vitamin D):

- Contains calcium from leafy greens (kale, sprouts)
- Vitamin D from mushrooms in some formulations
- Helps you reach daily calcium goals

Pillar 2 (Vegetables Over Fruit):

- Vegetable-forward formulation (kale, cucumber, sprouts, barley grass)
- Only 5-8g sugar per serving (vs. 30-50g in fruit smoothies)
- Adaptogenic herbs instead of fruit as primary ingredients

Pillar 3 (Protein):

- Some formulations include plant protein
- Perfect base for protein smoothie (add scoop of protein powder)
- Quick breakfast option when paired with eggs or Greek yogurt

Suggested Daily Use

Morning: Karviva + protein source (eggs, yogurt, protein powder)

Afternoon: Karviva as snack (prevents afternoon energy crash)

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Week 1: Foundation

- Track current calcium, vegetable, fruit, and protein intake
- Identify gaps
- Stock kitchen with Pillar 1, 2, 3 foods
- Try Karviva as breakfast or snack replacement

Week 2-4: Implementation

- Follow 7-day meal plan rotation
- Use weekly checklist
- Track symptoms
- Adjust portions based on hunger and energy

Month 2+: Optimization

- Fine-tune based on what's working
 - Consider quarterly Karviva Wellness Reset
 - Make this your sustainable lifestyle
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RESOURCES

Download these tools:

- Weekly tracking sheet (PDF)
- Shopping list template
- Meal prep guide

Learn more:

- Blog: "Why Menopause Changes Your Metabolism"
- Blog: "The Truth About Fruit During Menopause"
- Blog: "Why Karviva's Wellness Reset Is Different"

Questions?

Email us or comment on the blog—we read every single one.

About Karviva:

Founded by Dr. Angela Zeng (PhD, MBA), Karviva bridges Traditional Chinese Medicine with modern nutritional science. Every formulation is designed to support women's health through hormonal transitions with adaptogenic herbs, low sugar, and strategic nutrition.

Shop: Karviva Wellness Beverages

Learn: About the Wellness Reset Program

Connect: Join our newsletter for hormone-balancing nutrition guidance

Print this guide and keep it on your fridge. Share it with friends going through menopause. Most importantly—use it. Your body will thank you.

Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice. Consult your healthcare provider before making significant dietary changes, especially if you have health conditions or take medications.