



Transcript

RhondaNP

The Menopause Guide Podcast with RhondaNP Episode #007

Show notes at <https://www.rhondanp.com/007>

- Announcer: Welcome to RhondaNP's Menopause Guide Podcast with Rhonda Jolliffe, nurse practitioner, hormone expert and menopause mentor. Balance your menopause experience with natural solutions and regain control to live the life you love. Let's get started.
- Chris: Hi, this is Chris Dockter, and I'm your co-host for the menopause guide podcast with Rhonda NP. I'll be joined in just a minute by Rhonda Jolliffe. If this is your first time listening we are really happy that you're here today. We produce this podcast every week, and you'll be able to find any of the resources we mention as well as our show notes at our website RhondaNP.com. Today's episode is number 007 and we've named it "Exercise, Why You Might be Doing it All Wrong". Today we dive into why it's so important to exercise during menopause, and the positive difference it makes with balancing out your hormones. Rhonda goes into all of the details, and we talk about the right ways to exercise, and it is different from what you might be doing right now. We discuss ways to adapt our current ways of exercising related to running and biking, and we go into detail on the relaxing and calming exercises, one of which is Pilates.
- Rhonda is a certified Pilates instructor, and she breaks down why this is the perfect exercise for perimenopausal and menopausal women. I do it, and I love it. We cover some information on the right types of supplements to take. We touch on the concept of our exercise bucket list, and finally we talk about ways to improve our human growth hormone which can be a great support during this time. There's lot of great information to share in this episode, so let's get moving.
- Today's topic is exercise. You're going to either love it, or you hate it, but we're going to talk about it today, so why don't we start really talking about why during menopause we need to think about changing up our exercise routine?
- Rhonda: Well, you know there's some people that don't exercise at all, and I have to tell you that if you are not exercising while going through menopause you're going to figure out really quickly that it's going to make a big difference to start an exercise program. If you're one that hasn't exercised, and you're not an exerciser, you do need to do something, and that might look different than those that have been exercising their whole life, but it doesn't matter who it is, what it is, we need to exercise.



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- Chris: Why do you need to start? What's the big difference it makes during menopause?
- Rhonda: The number one reason it helps balance out the hormones, so there's just study after study on what exercise really does to our chemistry of our body, and basically it will help lower insulin levels. Which insulin comes from the pancreas which manages our blood sugar, and the insulin takes a hit at menopause because you don't have those ovaries doing their job, so insulin becomes more important, so it helps lower insulin levels.
- The other thing it does chemically is it lowers cortisol levels, so cortisol is our stress hormone. Now, we know that a lot of people exercise to relieve stress, and that's why because it does help that chemically in our body decreases the cortisol levels, and so it helps us manage our stress. Those two main hormones are effected in exercise and extremely important at menopause.
- Chris: Okay, so that makes sense, so when you exercise you feel better, but we can't do the ... Let's say, so I am a runner. I used to be a big runner, and when I got into perimenopause because of our relationship you told me, "Oh, you can't do that anymore as much as you have been." Why not?
- Rhonda: Yeah. Well, if you're a long distance runner for instance, what you are doing is you're pouring out a little bit too much adrenalin over time. When I say over time it might be that if you're actually running for 45 minutes to an hour you're really getting into that adrenalin surges. You're using a lot more adrenalin, and that in turn can actually wear you down because it slows adrenal glands that are now doing the work load during menopause, so if you're pouring out too much adrenalin you can actually get really tired, so if you're feeling more fatigued than you used to and exercise is not helping that it's making it worse you need to cut back.
- Chris: What kinds of ways can we adapt our exercise in perimenopause and menopause?
- Rhonda: You know, if you really love that running what I would suggest is a run walk, and so that's like a high intensity interval training type thing, so you can run for maybe two minutes and then walk for a minute. Run for three minutes, walk for two minutes. A run walk will actually kind of bring those cortisol levels down without pouring out too much adrenalin because you're getting those rest periods, so that's really if you have to run that is a really good way to do it, and probably if you're doing something like that 20 to 25 minutes is enough. You shouldn't do that for a long period of time either because eventually it does wear you down.



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- Chris: Then when you're talking about running would that also hold true for biking or anything else where you get your cardio level up really high?
- Rhonda: Yeah, yeah, it does. The thing about running that's interesting as you go through menopause the things that change are really our hormones affect our joints, and so when you're running it is affecting your joints more now because you don't have that lubrication that you're getting when you have estrogen on board, so you're probably going to get more arthritic changes and some pain in your joints a lot quicker now that you've gone through menopause.
- Chris: If that's the case, going a little off topic here, what kind of supplement should you take in terms of if you have joint pain because the estrogen is kind of slowly draining from your body?
- Rhonda: It is. It is. Well, fish oils are kind of at the top of the list. You really should be having fish oils because they're an oil that actually helps for inflammation in general, so that's a really good supplement to take. Turmeric is a nice supplement for inflammation itself because when you're doing too much exercises you're causing an inflammatory response which in turn will cause joint inflammation and pain, so turmeric is another one. Then for the joints specifically a combination of chondroitin, MSM, and hyaluronic acid is really a good option.
- Chris: Turmeric. Do you take that in a capsule form, or can I just put that in my shake in the morning?
- Rhonda: You can put it in your shake in the morning. It comes in many forms. It comes in pill form. You can get it in a tea, and you can just get it in ... It's an herb, and so you can get it in a powder form, and you can put it in hot water. You can stick it in your shake. Put it in with heated up coconut milk, and that's a really nice thing in the evening to take because it actually can help you sleep.
- Chris: Good, good, so let's talk a little bit about what exercise is appropriate at this point.
- Rhonda: Regular moderate exercise is the best, so you want to exercise at least five times a week of moderate exercise. When I say moderate exercise it's kind of what we were talking about. Maybe just 20 to 30 minutes versus that hour, and if you really like to exercise doing 15 to 20 minutes twice a day would be better than doing that hour long exercise once a day.



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- Chris: Okay, okay. You talk a little bit about some of the relaxing exercises. Let's talk through those a little bit.
- Rhonda: Right, so we think about cardio, and cardio is really important, but almost more importantly, they're probably both the same, is to really be doing flexibility and relaxing exercises because this is so important when you've got a loss of hormones as well to keep your joints flexible, so yoga, Pilates, tai chi, qigong these are all things that actually kind of calm down your system, and they lower cortisol levels, lower adrenalin levels, so I call them the relaxing exercises, and they're really important to support your adrenal gland You should be doing these at least three times a week.
- Chris: Okay, so Pilates, and a confession, I just started Pilates about six months ago, and I really didn't even know what it was all about, and you're a certified Pilates instructor.
- Rhonda: Yeah, reformer. I do reformer Pilates which I am a huge fan of reformer Pilates because it takes less work load on your joints, and it's just stabilizes your core and pretty much anybody can do it to start out, so huge for your flexibility. Huge for your core strength which is what we lose as we age, and so that's really important. Also you learn how to breathe, and so lot of people actually hold their breath when they exercise.
- Chris: I do.
- Rhonda: Which is like an oxymoron of what we really should be doing is breathing more, so Pilates teaches you how to breathe, so if you really learn the Pilates breath a lot of runners become better runners by doing the Pilates breath because they're breathing, and breathing and working our core when you're doing any exercise is really important especially at menopause.
- Chris: Tell me, I've heard of floor Pilates and reformer Pilates. What's the difference?
- Rhonda: Floor Pilates basically you're on the floor with a mat, and it's called mat Pilates, and you're using your body more, and so some people that have maybe a lower back problems it might be a little too straining for them, or when you're first starting out your core. If you have a really weak core it's a lot harder to do versus reformer you can work out at your own pace to strengthen your core so you can do more exercises, so we do some beginner exercises initially until they get their core strength going, and then you add in more intermediate and advanced, and it's a pulley system, so you actually have this pulley, and so it has less strain on your joints and your muscles, and it actually works your core You can concentrate on your breathing a lot more I think than doing on the mat.



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- Chris: You know, I have done Pilates now like I said for a couple of months, and I can tell I'm so much more ... My strength in my core is crazy. When you're doing it you don't feel like you're doing much of anything, and the next day you hit the floor and you're like, "Oh, crap. What did I do yesterday? Oh, yeah. It was that Pilates class." But it's really kind of soothing when you're doing it because it's very rhythmic, too.
- Rhonda: It is. It is, yeah, yeah. It's one of my favorite exercises, and I actually was exposed to it, it was a physician that was in a car accident, and she lived in New York, and she had been doing it in New York, and when she moved here there was no availability. She had talked to me about it, and so that was the first I had heard about the reformer Pilates, and she did it for her rehab training for her back, and so it's being used also for that. For people with injuries. What's really cool is if you do have an injury there's a lot of exercises that are designed just to strengthen that area, so it can be very therapeutic, as well.
- Chris: Oh, cool. Good. You know, one of the other things in terms of perimenopause and menopause as we get to this stage of our lives is, you know a lot of times we think about those bucket list things that I'm ... Like I remember Oprah. I think she was 40 or 50, and she ran a marathon. Like, you go Oprah. You go girl. You're really saying you shouldn't do that.
- Rhonda: Well, you know there's definitely good and bad. If you haven't been a runner, at menopause is not the time to start. It really isn't. I mean, if you've been a runner up until then it's okay. Just maybe slow down the pace a little bit, but to start that exercise it really can wear down your adrenal system because you don't have those hormones, and so increased injury or arthritis or things like that are going to be more common for the menopausal women that hasn't been exercising and to start something that strenuous, so yeah it becomes this bucket list. I'm going to run a 5K when I'm 50, and so if you want to run a 5K if you're under 40, do it when you're 40 versus 50 because at 50 it's really not the best time to be starting a running program because you're just starting to go through menopause then.
- Chris: Yeah, so what other tips do you have for exercising for perimenopausal and menopausal women?



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- Rhonda: Yeah, well it's all about hormones, so there's definitely some things that go on in exercise. The human growth hormone that we lose more rapidly after menopause. You can actually do some things exercise wise to improve on that, so that burst training or that high interval. Like when I said you could run for two minutes and walk for a minute and kind of do that. That's one of them. Doing exercising in the morning on an empty stomach actually can increase your human growth hormone production, and then eating fat later in the day and after your exercise meal getting some protein and some antioxidants and some fat, and you eat that as a post meal. That actually can improve your human growth hormone.
- Chris: Talk a little bit about when you say your recommended protein high oxidant low fat. What would that look like on my plate?
- Rhonda: Like 15 to 20 grams of protein, so if you have a good protein shake.
- Chris: Okay.
- Rhonda: Most of them contain 15 to 20 grams. Some of them are high protein. You don't want to ever get into high protein as a menopausal woman. You want moderate protein, so 15 to 20 grams at a sitting is a moderate protein. Higher for a lot of women because women tend to not eat protein, so it seems like you're eating more protein when you go to that 15 to 20 grams, but that's really a moderate protein. High protein is not something menopausal women should do because it is hard on your bones, and it does deplete, so 15 to 20 grams. Most protein shakes have that, and so just simply having a protein shake after you eat is a really good option, and maybe putting some greens in there. Some fruits, some vegetables, and doing a smoothie that's high antioxidant, and then maybe adding a teaspoon of coconut oil or peanut butter or almond butter or something that actually puts a little fat. That's a really good post exercise meal.
- Chris: Why do we need fat? I don't get that. Tell me why we need fat.
- Rhonda: Well, fat is really important for hormone production.
- Chris: Okay.



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- Rhonda: If you don't have enough fat your body actually cannot produce hormones, and that's all hormones, so you need fat, and fat also helps balance out insulin levels as well, and so again we're trying to balance that out, so yeah low fat diet or not is really not a favored diet of menopause actually. Women should not be on a low fat diet. Which it's kind of funny because they tend to gain a little weight, and so they want to decrease on their fat to lose the weight when in reality if you increase on your fat a little bit, increase on your protein a little bit, you're probably going to manage the weight a lot easier.
- Chris: Okay, okay. Was there any other tip about exercising?
- Rhonda: Oh, and by the way on that fat, eating that later in the day actually is good for that human growth hormone, so I tend to recommend eating fat protein and carbs more carbs more fat in the evening, more protein in the morning.
- Chris: Okay, okay. Very good. Very good. You know, when I was looking at this podcast and researching it a little bit I found this really great article. It makes a lot of sense. It just talks about the value of exercise. It was in the New York times in September, and it just talks about not only we want to feel better, but exercising is a new study that goes a strong incentive to exercise is you can save ... They quantified this which was kind of interesting. You can save about \$2,500 a year by reduced medical costs just by walking 30 minutes five times a week which is crazy. You know, if you think about it not only do you want to feel better, but you can also save money really by staying out of the doctor's office.
- Rhonda: Well, I can attest to this very thing because I've been practicing for 20 years and seeing a lot of patients, and when people can commit to a really good healthy lifestyle I don't see them as often, and it's interesting because sometimes people come in and it's like, "Oh my gosh I haven't seen you for a year." And they're like, "Yeah, because I'm doing so good." Not to mention I've taken women and men too off of blood pressure medication, cholesterol medication, so the cost of that which by the way is not getting cheaper, and so neither are the office visits and what insurance coverage is doing, so you will definitely save. I can completely attest to this, and \$2,500 a year really sounds right.



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- Chris: Good, good, so when we think about exercise and menopause is there anything else of all the things we talked about today what's kind of the take away message for someone just coming into menopause or perimenopause and really understanding that, you know, this is a time to start to do things a little bit differently?
- Rhonda: Yeah. To really really start exercising. If you're not exercising at all it's going to make a huge difference on how you feel, and if you are an over exerciser to really look at that, and so if you are running seven days a week or even six days a week, and you're running miles, and you can't sit down, and you're really ... You know. I mean, pretty much people that are high adrenalin people know they're high adrenalin people, and if that's you just calming that down. You want to calm that system down. Maybe only run three times a week, and adding in that weight training and those relaxing exercises.
- Chris: Good, good. Well, thank you, so again we want to wish you all the best in your exercise efforts, and start to think about things just a little differently, so thank you so much for joining us today.
- Rhonda: Yes, thanks for joining.
- Speaker 1: Thanks for joining the menopause guide podcast with Rhonda NP. You'll find the show notes and other valuable information at our website RhondaNP.com. Don't worry about this menopause thing. You've got this.