



WORLD MENOPAUSE THEME, 18TH OCTOBER, 2025

# Summary: IMS White Paper — The Role of Lifestyle Medicine in Menopausal Health (2025)



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## OVERVIEW

The International Menopause Society (IMS) 2025 White Paper positions lifestyle medicine as the foundation of effective menopause care.

It reframes menopause as a natural life stage — not a disease — and presents clear, evidence-based strategies to help women reduce symptoms, protect long-term health, and enhance quality of life through everyday lifestyle choices.



## THE ROLE THE SIX PILLARS OF LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

### 1. HEALTHY EATING & NUTRITION

The White Paper identifies a Mediterranean-style dietary pattern as the most evidence-based model for menopausal health — rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, wholegrains, nuts, and oily fish, with olive oil as the main dietary fat and limited consumption of red and processed meats.

This pattern supports cardiovascular, metabolic, and emotional wellbeing, reduces inflammation, and helps regulate weight. The focus is on sustainable habits rather than restrictive diets — prioritising nourishment, not deprivation.

The DASH diet (Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension), which closely resembles the Med diet with one key differential — the sodium aspect — this makes it slightly better in terms of blood pressure reduction.

### 2. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY / EXERCISE

Regular movement is essential for managing symptoms and protecting long-term health. The paper recommends a multi-component exercise plan combining aerobic activity, resistance training, flexibility, and balance work.

This comprehensive approach improves vasomotor symptoms, preserves muscle and bone mass, enhances cardiovascular fitness, and boosts mental wellbeing. Consistency and enjoyment are key to maintaining progress over time.

### 3. MENTAL WELLBEING & STRESS MANAGEMENT

Psychological health significantly influences how women experience menopause.

Mindfulness, therapy, relaxation techniques, and cultivating social connection all reduce anxiety, improve mood, and aid sleep.

The White Paper highlights that workplaces and communities play a vital role in creating psychologically safe, stigma-free environments that normalise menopause conversations and support mental resilience.



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#### 4. AVOIDANCE OF RISKY SUBSTANCES

The White Paper identifies smoking as a major modifiable risk factor, associated with more severe symptoms and earlier menopause onset. It notes that the duration of smoking exposure is more harmful than intensity and that cessation delivers substantial benefits, even in later life.

Importantly, the authors point out that women in the menopausal age group are at increased risk of substance misuse, particularly alcohol and prescription medication, often used to cope with anxiety, low mood, or sleep disturbance.

They urge greater awareness and proactive support, noting that substance use in women is often under-recognised or stigmatised.

The paper also acknowledges gender bias in existing research, as women are frequently underrepresented in studies on substance use and health outcomes.

Overall, moderation of alcohol and avoidance of harmful substances are reinforced as key strategies for protecting midlife health and reducing chronic disease risk.

#### 5. RESTORATIVE SLEEP — AND ITS INTERCONNECTED HEALTH EFFECTS

The White Paper places special emphasis on sleep as a critical regulator of multiple body systems, influencing everything from mood to metabolism.

Poor sleep during menopause is linked not only with fatigue and emotional distress, but also with impaired cognitive function, bone loss, metabolic dysregulation, and cardiovascular risk

- **Cognitive Health:** The paper notes that menopause-related sleep disturbance and hormonal changes contribute to “subjective cognitive complaints” such as forgetfulness and concentration issues. Addressing sleep quality and stress may help improve focus and cognitive performance.
- **Bone Health:** Disrupted or poor-quality sleep is associated with lower bone mineral density and higher fracture risk, reinforcing the importance of restorative rest for skeletal maintenance.
- **Metabolic Health:** Poor sleep is linked to insulin resistance, weight gain (particularly central adiposity), and altered appetite hormones — all key factors in metabolic syndrome.
- **Cardiovascular Health:** Irregular circadian rhythms and ongoing sleep disruption can elevate blood pressure and inflammation, increasing cardiovascular risk.

#### 6. HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL CONNECTION

Social and emotional connection are highlighted as essential for overall wellbeing.

Supportive relationships, community engagement, and a sense of belonging help buffer stress, promote positive mood, and improve both mental and physical health outcomes.





# Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI)

The White Paper recognises the unique needs of women with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI).

These women face higher risks of cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and cognitive decline.

The authors recommend lifestyle interventions — alongside hormonal therapy — focusing on balanced nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and smoking cessation. They also call for more targeted research to better support this population.

## KEY FINDINGS

Lifestyle interventions improve vasomotor symptoms, mood, sleep, weight management, and metabolic markers, while supporting bone and cardiovascular health.

Integrating the six lifestyle pillars provides cost-effective, scalable solutions for healthcare and workplace settings.

Long-term, sustainable change supported by professional guidance yields the greatest results.

## IN SUMMARY

The IMS 2025 White Paper reframes menopause care through the lens of lifestyle medicine.

It reinforces that small, consistent choices — in how we eat, move, sleep, connect, and manage stress — profoundly shape long-term health outcomes.

**The message is clear: empowering women with evidence-based lifestyle tools is essential to thriving through menopause and beyond.**

*References: Chika V. Anekwe, Antonio Cano, Jennifer Mulligan, Seng Bin Ang, Corinne N. Johnson, Nick Panay, Zoe Schaedel, Eftitan Y. Akam, Florence Porterfield, Emily Wang & Rossella E. Nappi (12 Sep 2025): The role of lifestyle medicine in menopausal health: a review of non-pharmacologic interventions, Climacteric, DOI: 10.1080/13697137.2025.2548806*