

Nourishing Your Body Through Perimenopause

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Family and Consumer Sciences

Leader's Guide

2026 Annual Lesson Series



Note:

This lesson is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. If participants have any questions or concerns about their health, direct them to consult their healthcare provider.

Introduction

Perimenopause is a transitional phase before menopause when the woman's body undergoes significant hormonal changes. The changes in these hormones affect not only reproductive health but also mood, energy levels, bone density, and cardiovascular health. A nutritious diet combined with a healthy lifestyle is important for symptom management and improvement of overall well-being.

This lesson is an overview of what perimenopause is, the physical and emotional changes that could occur, and dietary and lifestyle strategies that could help make this period more enjoyable. The intake of certain nutrients, management of triggers, and a nutritionally balanced diet can improve overall well-being.

Please refer to the Nourishing Your Body Through Perimenopause fact sheet for more background information.

Educational Goals

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

Define perimenopause and its impact on health and overall well-being. Participants will have an overview of hormonal changes during perimenopause and how it affects the body.

Identify some symptoms associated with perimenopause. Participants will learn what physical and emotional symptoms are common during perimenopause.

Identify nutritional strategies to help relieve symptoms of perimenopause. Discuss symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings, and bone density loss and how nutrition approaches may be helpful. Discuss key foods rich in calcium, vitamin D, magnesium, omega-3s, and isoflavones.

Understand the role of physical activity and mental health in enhancing well-being. Participants will learn how lifestyle choices may help relieve perimenopausal symptoms.

Identifying when to seek advice from a healthcare professional. Participants will learn when to seek help from healthcare professionals.

Intended Audiences

- Women experiencing perimenopause or approaching menopausal age.
- Family members supporting women going through perimenopause.
- Community groups focused on women's health and wellness.
- Senior centers, adult learning classes, and support groups focusing on mid-life health.

Lesson Preparation

- Read the “Nourishing Your Body Through Perimenopause” fact sheet, leader's guide, and Power Point presentation (including the notes section of the presentation). Familiarize yourself with the content and terms.
- Consider your audience and adjust to their needs and culture.
- People might share private/personal information, so find a setting/location that will provide privacy if needed.
- Consider any topics you would like to expand on in your group. For example, maybe you want to provide more education on how to include more plant foods in the diet, or focus on physical activity, or teach them about relaxation techniques to manage stress.
- This lesson is about 60 minutes; however, the duration might change if you choose to expand on specific topics.
- Consider different learning style preferences and use visual and auditory resources from reputable sources to explain some of the concepts in the lesson.
- Consider how the program will be delivered to the identified audience. If the presentation location limits the use of the PowerPoint consider printing handouts or the PowerPoint for participant use.
- K-State Research and Extension FCS Agent – Create a program activity in PEARS

and attach the program evaluation. After attaching the evaluation to the program activity, copy the QR code and paste it onto the last slide of the PowerPoint presentation.

- If you are not a K-State Research and Extension FCS Agent, you can print the evaluation and give it to participants at the end.

Leading the Lesson

The “Nourishing Your Body Through Perimenopause” fact sheet is intended to serve as an outline for this lesson. The introduction in this leader's guide summarizes the fact sheet accompanying this leader's guide.

Suggested activities to support this lesson

Ask the group about their previous knowledge.

Sample questions:

- What do you know about perimenopause? What do you think happens to the body during perimenopause?
- What triggers perimenopausal symptoms?
- **Hot flashes triggers:**
 - Hormonal imbalance.
 - Hot weather.
 - Hot showers.
 - The intake of alcohol, caffeine, spicy foods, or hot beverages.
 - Emotional stress and anxiety.
 - Smoking and physical inactivity.
- **What makes perimenopause worse:**
 - Lifestyle: High-stress levels, poor diet, and lack of exercise.
 - Substances: Smoking, alcohol, caffeine, and sugar.
 - Weight: A higher body mass index (BMI).
 - Health conditions: uterine fibroids.
 - Family medical history: early menopause.
 - Cancer treatment: Chemotherapy and pelvic radiation for cancer.
 - Hysterectomy: Removal of the uterus but leaving the ovaries intact.
- Do you know of any specific foods that help with symptoms of perimenopause?

Open it up for discussion and encourage participants to share their thoughts, experiences, and

ideas. Make notes about their answers; you will need them throughout the lesson to clarify any unclear concepts.

Discuss questions to ask when going to a healthcare provider's appointment. Have them brainstorm some questions they are curious about or they would like to know more about. Here are some examples:

- What is likely causing my symptoms?
- What kinds of tests do I need?
- What is the best course of action for my situation?
- What are the alternatives to the primary approach that you're suggesting?
- I have some other health conditions. How can I best manage them together?
- What will determine whether I should plan for a follow-up visit?

Note: Encourage participants to be prepared to share information about their symptoms, periods, diet, and lifestyle activities during their healthcare provider's appointments.

Movement Break: Low-Impact Exercises.

Highlight the benefits of physical activity during perimenopause for weight management, bone health, and mood. For this activity you will need to:

- Familiarize yourself with "A guide to basic stretches" from Mayo Clinic.
 - [mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/stretching/art-20546848](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/stretching/art-20546848)
- Have space for participants to move.
- Have chairs or be close to a wall if the participant needs support to avoid falls.
- You can also use the *Five for Five* curriculum for this section. This curriculum provides flexibility, endurance, muscle strengthening, and mindfulness activities. You can access the curriculum here:
 - marketplace.uidaho.edu/C20272_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=5505

Instructions: Lead participants through a series of simple, low-impact exercises like stretching. You can always try yoga poses or walking in place. Discuss how regular movement can reduce anxiety, support cardiovascular health, and alleviate joint pain. You can provide handouts with stretching exercises to try at home, such as the Five for Five exercises.

Personal Wellness Goals Activity. Help participants in setting personalized wellness goals related to nutrition, physical activity, and stress management that can aid with the symptoms of perimenopause. For this activity you will need the SMART goal worksheet at the end of this guide. Ask participants to set one nutrition-related, physical activity or stress-reduction goal. Discuss ways to track progress and share resources that can help them achieve their goals.

Troubleshooting example scenarios. Discuss practical strategies to manage perimenopause symptoms. For this activity, you will need the scenarios at the end of this guide. Print the scenarios and cut them into cards to give to participants. In groups, participants should discuss how they would handle the scenario, focusing on lifestyle changes. This is a moment for participants to share tips or use fact sheet information to help the person in the example scenario.

Perimenopause scenarios

Scenario 1: Rediscovering Joy Through

Movement. Jo, a 48-year-old single mother, found herself overwhelmed by the combined pressures of parenting, caring for her sick parents, and dealing with sleepless nights. One day, she broke down at the supermarket, realizing that the exhaustion she felt could be more than just stress. A friend gave her an old rowing machine as a way to help her with physical activity. As she struggled with fatigue, mood swings, and a lack of personal time, Jo felt stuck in a cycle. How can Jo incorporate physical activity into her routine to reclaim her energy and mental health during perimenopause?

Scenario 2: Balancing Motherhood and

Perimenopause. Diane, a mother of a spirited 6-year-old daughter named Lola, was navigating the chaotic nature of parenting while facing the challenges of perimenopause. As her hormones fluctuated, Diane's confidence started to dwindle. She felt increasingly fatigued and found her patience thinning, which affected her relationship with Lola. Despite her struggles, Lola's infectious joy in simple activities, like making popcorn or pretending to be a "Rainbow Sparkle Fairy," brought fleeting moments of joy. Diane found herself caught in a balancing act, juggling her child's needs and the emotional toll of perimenopause. What strategies can Diane use to

manage the emotional and physical challenges of perimenopause while being present for her daughter?

Scenario 3: Seeking Help and Facing Fear.

Kate's began having intense hot flashes, fatigue, and bursts of anger that severely strained her relationships with her family. She felt out of control and unsure of what was happening to her body. Kate lives in a rural area and the limited available medical care makes her anxious about finding a provider. Months passed, and Kate's symptoms persisted, leaving her feeling isolated in her struggles. Eventually, after medical tests, she learned her symptoms were related to perimenopause. Still, she struggled to find a way to manage the emotional and physical effects. How can Kate use lifestyle changes to alleviate her perimenopause symptoms?

Scenario 4: Advocating for Herself. Maria, a 42-year-old mom of two teens, had been feeling out of sorts for months. Hot flashes interrupted her sleep, leaving her exhausted during the day. Her patience wore thin, and mood swings left her feeling like a

stranger to herself. Seeking answers, she visited her healthcare provider and had her labs checked, only to be told everything was "within normal limits." The reassurance felt hollow as her symptoms persisted. Frustrated and dismissed, Maria couldn't shake the feeling that something deeper was going on. She left the appointment wondering what steps to take next, determined not to ignore what she felt.

Evaluation

After the lesson, ask participants to complete the evaluation electronically or on paper. The local Extension Office should manually enter paper evaluation responses into PEARS after the event.

Useful Resources

Four Types of Exercise Can Improve Your Health and Physical Ability, nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/four-types-exercise-can-improve-your-health-and-physical

7 Reasons To Start Walking in Place, health.clevelandclinic.org/is-walking-in-place-exercise

Office of Women's Health – Perimenopause, womenshealth.gov/topics/perimenopause

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Nourishing Your Body Through Perimenopause

Please take a moment to respond to the questions below.

Date and location of presentation: _____

My county of residence: _____

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Non-binary ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to answer

Race: ☐ American Indian/Native American ☐ White ☐ Asian
☐ Hispanic or Latino ☐ Black/African American ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
☐ Prefer not to respond

Ethnicity: ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Non Hispanic/Latino ☐ Prefer not to respond

Age: ☐ 18-29 years ☐ 30-59 years ☐ 60-75 years
☐ 76+ years ☐ Prefer not to answer

1. Because of this program, I increased my knowledge of how nutrition can help manage perimenopausal symptoms.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. Because of this program, I increased my knowledge of the symptoms and health impacts associated with perimenopause.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. Because of this program, I increased my understanding of perimenopause and its effects on women's health.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. Because of this program, I am confident I can include foods in my eating plan that can help alleviate perimenopausal symptoms.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. Please list 2 habits that you plan to incorporate because of this program.

6. Please share any additional comments or suggestions.