

MyMT™ *by Dr Wendy Sweet (PhD)*
MY MENOPAUSE TRANSFORMATION

Fluid Retention and the Connection With Menopause



**EMPOWERING WOMEN TO AGE
HEALTHILY BY FOLLOWING THE SCIENCE**

FLUID RETENTION AND THE CONNECTION WITH MENOPAUSE

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I could see her limping as she walked along the hospital corridor. We were in the Emergency Room at the hospital unexpectedly – hubby had crashed off his bike and was waiting to be checked over. Middle-age nurses were everywhere and I was sitting there quietly, observing their swollen ankles and thinking about their aching legs and muscles with having to be on their feet for hours at a time.

Hi, I'm Dr Wendy Sweet (PhD), a Women's Healthy Ageing Educator and the Founder of My Menopause Transformation (12 week symptom reduction and weight loss programs).



Dr Wendy Sweet (PhD)
Women's Healthy Ageing & Menopause Educator

In my former nursing days, that used to be me as well. But in those younger days, I had greater levels of oestrogen and progesterone and a more effective lymphatic system.

I also had a more efficient cardiovascular system and one-way valves in my legs that weren't ageing and losing some of their elasticity. After all, this is one of the primary changes in the body, as women go from peri-menopause to menopause to post-menopause. The blood vessels age very rapidly.

Numerous women experience swollen ankles and fluid retention as they move through menopause. Some of these nurses that afternoon were no exception.

As I observed this middle-aged nurse's puffy ankles, I wondered if she knew about the effect of her changing hormones on her lymphatic system, fluid balance and the cause of her menopause oedema?

When we arrive in mid-life, both oestrogen and progesterone changes have important effects on both body fluid regulation and cardiovascular and lymphatic function.

Numerous women end up with tired, swollen ankles and feet, tightness in their breasts and some of you may have also experienced a protruding gut during menopause.

You may not know that these concerns result from the changes that occur to your liver and your lymph vessels and lymph nodes as oestrogen declines with age.

Swelling of tissues can cause many women distress during menopause and any distension or oedema (tissue swelling) must be checked out with your Doctor obviously, especially if you are on Menopause HRT, and you are taking progesterone. I mention progesterone for a reason.

Progesterone's role in tissue swelling is complex. It can contribute to oedema (swelling) in certain situations. It is a steroid hormone that is produced by the adrenal cortex, so in response to stress, the adrenal cortex releases both cortisol and progesterone. Higher levels of progesterone may contribute to tissue swelling and affect water retention in tissues. A condition called Lymphedema.

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Lymphedema and Menopause

The type of swelling that arrives in mid-life is called Lymphedema and if the swelling occurs in the abdominal cavity, this is called ascites. Both situations require you to see your Doctor, so please do this. There may be an un-natural build-up of tissue fluids because of impaired lymphatic drainage and you might need to see a Lymphatic Drainage Specialist too.

Whilst the effects of fluid regulation in middle-aged and older women are controlled by the kidneys, very few of us realise that oestrogen changes in menopause also cause some water and sodium retention, which of course, makes us feel a bit swollen and bloated.

Despite all the attention paid to oestrogen changes as we move through menopause, the role that Progesterone plays in fluid retention and fluid balance is equally important.

Progesterone is the primary steroid involved in blood pressure changes around the time of the menopause and is therefore, important for fluid regulation as well. (Stachenfeld, 2014).

But there is another issue too – our lymphatic system, including the lymph nodes are ageing. Not only do the lymphatic vessels lose some elasticity as levels of oestrogen and progesterone decline during the menopause transition, but the lymph nodes are changing with age too.

Can Menopause Cause Swollen Lymph Nodes?

As individuals age, lymph nodes undergo structural and functional changes, including a decrease in the number of nodes, the replacement of normal lymphoid tissue with connective tissue or fat, and alterations in immune cell populations. These changes can impact the lymph node's ability to effectively filter lymph and activate immune responses. In both blood vessels and lymphatic vessels, this is known as 'vascular stiffness'.

So, when we are sitting or standing a lot or if any of you are taking a long-haul flight, the return of blood back to the heart from our lower extremities isn't as efficient. We need to help it along otherwise we get swollen ankles or as it's medically known, oedema.



"I've lost 10kg and 6cm off my bust. I don't feel puffy or bloated and feel in control of my life again. Your programme was a life-changer for me!"

Andrea, New Zealand

SWOLLEN ANKLES, FLUID RETENTION AND THE CONNECTION WITH MENOPAUSE

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Vascular stiffness contributes to increased fluid retention and risk of blood clots as we move through menopause.

Leg and ankle oedema is a sign of blood pooling in the veins as well as an inefficient lymphatic system. It is a well-known problem among passengers during and after long-haul flights. And I would say, women in menopause who are on their feet for hours on end, such as the hard-working nurses.

The main changes that occur in our ageing lymphatic vessels are:

1. Loss of around 20% of their contraction strength (just like our blood vessels).
2. Around a 70% decrease in contraction frequency.
3. Increasing loss of lymphatic muscle cells which is linked to oxidative stress (inflammation). Lymphatic muscle cells are linked to contraction of our muscles and propel lymph through valves to the draining lymph nodes.
4. A reduction in the levels of proteins that regulate muscle contraction.
5. A thinning of the lymphatic vessel walls.

As such, we need to better manage and help our lymphatic system as we move through menopause. So, here are 3 things you can do:

Because the lymphatic vessels don't contract as efficiently as they used to, then having **increased plant sources of nitric oxide is important**. You can add beetroot (beets) and celery to your diet or juice them instead.



Learn to breathe better. I talk about breathing in all of the MyMT™ Programs and teach women the best breathing strategy to use to improve tissue oxygenation. Because our lymphatic system works really closely with our nervous system, even a stressful day can affect lymphatic drainage. This is also why improving our breathing helps to stimulate the lymph vessels to do their job of removing inflammatory proteins and dangerous toxins that have myriad deleterious effects around the body.

Get moving (preferably in the morning). Our lymphatic system doesn't have a pump like the heart does. It relies on movement, massage, muscle contraction and improved breathing to function.



"I've lost 14kg and my blood pressure has come down. This programme is life-changing."

Christine (Nurse), New Zealand

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All hormones, nutrients and waste products going to and from the cells deep in our tissues, must pass through the interstitial or extracellular matrix (the areas between the tissues and blood vessels).

This depends on a reliable, functioning lymphatic system.

If the lymphatic channels cannot remove toxins properly, no hormone, no gene, no enzyme, and no molecule is going to work optimally, and there will be deposition of waste products into the tissues.

This is why many of you begin to feel bloated, experience tissue swelling and cellulite increases as you move through menopause.

When we understand that our lymphatic system is so important as we move through menopause, we can drink more water, get our feet up when we can, improve our breathing, wear flight stockings (even at work) and of course, get some massages or do some self-massage. Then for those of you doing lots of exercise, the same rules apply too.

Exercise (especially, resistance training), also puts up your blood pressure and causes interstitial tissue swelling, so if you find that your recovery after exercise isn't so great, then come on board with me when you can, as you need to know how to improve your recovery after exercise to match your changing blood vessels and ageing lymphatic system during or after menopause.

If you are struggling with your weight gain, symptoms or changing health, it would be my privilege to support you. My 2-hour **Masterclass on Lifestyle Science for Menopause** is the perfect starting point. Women tell me that in a sea of mis-information, this Masterclass makes so much sense. *Currently on sale for NZ \$15 (approx. US\$14, UK£8, €9, US\$9, CAD\$12).*

MyMT™ 12 week online programs.

- **Transform Me™** - Menopause Weight Loss and Symptom Reduction Program
- **Circuit Breaker™** - Symptom Reduction Program.
- **Beyond Menopause™** - Women's Healthy Ageing Program.



"No one I went to mentioned menopause.

I've now lost 20kg and off nearly all medications."

Dianne, Australia



MENOPAUSE WEIGHT LOSS AND SYMPTOM REDUCTION PROGRAM

<https://www.mymenopausetransformation.com/weight-loss-programmes/>



**“What magic is this MyMT™ Program?!
I’m now sleeping all night and have released 22lbs
(10kg)!”**

Julie, United Kingdom