

# FOOD & MOOD

## COACHING

### FEMALE FOCUSED FOODS

**Having two X chromosomes makes us unique and at certain times in need of some extra nutrients to support the female specific functions of our biology; monthly menstruations, pregnancy and menopause all pose changes in nutrient demands and hormonal fluctuations throughout our life.**

#### HEALTHY LIVER FOR HORMONE METABOLISM

Hormones, like all aspects of our physiology, rely on good nutritional information for optimal balance. Hormonal 'harmony' not only relies on optimal nutrition, but also the optimal functioning of our liver and digestive systems (recall weeks 8 & 9) and effective stress management. By now you are probably piecing together how the same healthy nutrition and lifestyle practices positively influence many different systems and how they interrelate.

Common female experiences from pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) throughout menstruating years, through to hot flashes and night sweats during peri-menopause, though considered normal, have been shown to improve with optimal nutrition, regular exercise, quality sleep and stress management.

Maintaining a healthy liver – focusing on liver loving foods and a healthy lifestyle – is important in keeping hormones in check, since it is in the liver where our hormones are metabolised. Estrogen metabolism is an influential factor in many female health issues, so supporting a healthy liver can help with optimal estrogen metabolism and clearing.

#### NUTRIENTS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR FEMALE HEALTH

##### Iron

This mineral is essential for life and especially important for women during menstruating years, pregnancy and breastfeeding. Iron helps in the production of haemoglobin, a protein found in red blood cells that carries oxygen in our blood to every cell in the body. Compared to men, women require more iron in their daily diet due to the loss of blood during menstruation, and increased demand during pregnancy. A woman's iron requirements lower considerably post menopause.

##### According to Nutrition Australia:

- + Women aged 19-50 years require 18mg per day
- + Pregnant women require 27mg per day
- + Women 51+ years require 8mg (the same as adult men)

##### Calcium & Vitamin D

Calcium and vitamin D are usually talked about together in relation to bone health. As women age, estrogen levels begin to decrease and go through perimenopause, and by the time of menopause (one full year after the last egg has been released) estrogen is at its lowest.



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Estrogen has protective factors influencing heart health and bone health, so post menopause risk for cardiovascular issues and osteoporosis (loss of bone density) increase. Both calcium and vitamin D are important in cardiovascular, bone and hormonal health, so it's important to ensure adequate levels are consumed throughout every stage of life

Vitamin D is best sourced through sunlight exposure on the skin but of course it can be obtained from certain food sources.

### Magnesium

Just like other minerals, magnesium aids in many bodily processes like energy production, protein formation, healthy inflammatory responses, optimal sleep health and support of healthy blood pressure. For women, magnesium can help with migraines, improve mood and alleviate pre-menstrual syndrome symptoms.

### Zinc

Zinc is a powerful mineral with antioxidant properties. It helps with keeping the immune system strong, aids in fighting inflammation and promotes faster healing. For women, zinc helps in the regulation of the menstrual cycle and the production of the female hormones. As Mother Nature would have it, many of the food sources that are rich in iron are also considered rich in zinc – she's intuitive.

### B-vitamins

B- vitamins are responsible for energy and nutrient metabolism, good cellular health, and support both the immune and nervous systems. Women also needs this group of vitamins for improved mood, stress management, memory and reducing symptoms of PMS. During pregnancy, increased intake of Folic acid or Folate (Vitamin B9) is recommended to prevent birth defects.

**Here is a summary of female focused nutrients and their food sources**

Nutrient	Food sources
Iron	Red meat, poultry, fish, kale, spinach, beans, lentils, nuts and fortified food items like fortified cereals
Calcium	Milk, yoghurt, cheese, sardines, tofu or tempeh, dark green leafy vegetables, soy beans and fortified plant-based milks
Vitamin D	Oily fishes like salmon and mackerel, red meat, egg yolks, fortified foods and supplements – SUNSHINE
Magnesium	Dark green leafy vegetables like silverbeet and spinach, quinoa, almonds, avocado, salmon, black bean, pepitas and dark chocolate.
Zinc	Meats, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, dairy, legumes, dark green leafy veggies, mushrooms and wholegrains
B- vitamins	Meats, poultry, eggs, fish, dairy products, dark green leafy vegetables, legumes, whole grains, fruits and seeds

