

# Healthy Aging Empowerment

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**"The menopause journey doesn't just happen from one night to the next...Sometimes it's not until hindsight that people realize what was going on."**

Dr. Alyssa Dweck, Chief Medical Officer, Bonafide

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An independent supplement by Mediaplanet to USA Today

**"Maintaining a loved one's dignity is key for caregivers. This means using discreet products so they feel less self-conscious and respecting their privacy."**

Marvell Adams Jr, CEO, Caregiver Action Network

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## BROOKE SHIELDS

**The actress, model, and author shares how she's embracing age and why you should, too**

[Read more on Page 08](#)

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# Navigating Menopause:

## Naomi Watts on Breaking Stigmas and Embracing Change

Actress Naomi Watts candidly discusses menopause, its stigmas, and how we can empower women through open discussions and community support.

### Did you feel well prepared for the physical changes that come with menopause? What surprised you the most about this time?

Long story short — no! When my doctor told me I was close to menopause at the age of 36, I nearly fell out of my chair. I was looking to start a family, so menopause was the last thing on my mind. I didn't know much about menopause at all at the time, so I went into a bit of a panic, trying to learn as much as I could about it.

I felt alone and ashamed, and like there was little information out there to guide me. Even the medical professionals I saw seemed to dismiss my concerns about symptoms or questions, which remained unanswered. When I tried to broach the subject with my friends, I was met with nervous laughter and, "Oh, you're too young to be in menopause."

I was especially surprised how badly it hit my skin: I had dry, raging, red, and itchy skin that was really uncomfortable. The products that used to help me were suddenly too harsh for my sensitive skin. That inspired me to create Stripes Beauty, to bring together products, education, and community to really support women's changing needs at this time.

### In your opinion, how can we encourage more open discussion about menopause and remove the stigma that makes women feel ashamed of such natural physical changes?

We are half the population! It's absurd that there is still any stigma associated with a natural part of life. When I found out I was entering into menopause at an early age, I asked my mother why she never told me more about it, and she said, "These are the conversations I never had with you because my mother never had them with me."

I don't blame her at all. I think this education needs to start young — at home, through conversations with our kids, and at school. Students get taught about hormonal changes in puberty as part of sex education — they should be taught then about the hormonal changes on the other side as well. Talking about our pain points openly, without shame, is the only way to help each other feel more prepared and less alone.

### What is the most notable impact you've seen Stripes have on women navigating menopause?

What I've seen women appreciate



Naomi Watts | Photo by Ben Watts

the most is having a community to talk to, to feel supported and more comfortable bringing up menopause in conversation — not just with other women, but also with their partners and kids. I used to have people stop me in the streets for my performances; now, if I get stopped in public, it's almost always by women expressing gratitude for helping to open this conversation.

I am proud of what we have built at Stripes Beauty and that we can provide real solutions for women trying to navigate this time in their lives. Feeling supported, with products that actually work, makes a big difference for a lot of people. So many brands completely neglect women once they hit their 40s or focus solely on anti-aging. At

Stripes, we know that aging is a privilege. I hope we've played a part in helping women find their confidence at every age.

### What advice do you have for women who may be struggling with their confidence as they enter midlife?

I've been there! Physical and mental changes in your body can mess with your confidence. What has helped me most is finding solutions that I know work for me, so that I can feel like myself — hydrated, strong, and healthy. Whether it be skincare, supplements, medication, or a workout routine, you deserve to feel your best. A reminder, in case no one else has told you: Your life isn't over when you hit 50; you can thrive during this time.

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# Science-Backed Solutions for **Managing Menopause Symptoms**

What do women really want for Valentine's Day? Forget about the box of chocolates. This year, we want to get real about women's health, have stigma-shattering conversations with our loved ones and care providers, and navigate the menopause journey with style and research-backed solutions. (Ok, we'll take the chocolate too.)

It's not that all seems like a tall order, fret not because Dr. Alyssa Dweck, practicing gynecologist and certified menopause provider, and the Bonafide team are here to deliver.

## Menopause 101

Bonafide's 4th annual State of Menopause Survey, which reaches more than 2,000 women ages 40-64 who are experiencing perimenopause and menopause symptoms, surfaced progress around menopause awareness and treatment in 2024 — as well as unfortunate and persistent knowledge gaps. While more women than ever are openly discussing menopause with friends and family, and talking to their healthcare providers about menopause symptoms, 7 out of 10 survey takers still don't know the technical definition of "menopause."

Dr. Dweck, Bonafide's chief medical officer, defines menopause as 12 consecutive months without menstruation, for no other obvious reason, after age 40. Menopause happens in three stages: perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause.

"The biggest disconnect for my patients and for women all over is that the menopause journey doesn't just happen from one night to the next," Dr. Dweck said. "Perimenopause is a lead up that can last 4 to 10 years, give or take. Sometimes it's not until hindsight that people realize what was going on."

It can take a while for women to understand they are entering menopause, in part because, while common symptoms exist (e.g., hot flashes, night sweats, mood changes), everyone's experience is unique and influenced by their personal health history, risk factors and genetic factors. (This is a sign to talk to your female family members about your health history!)

## Scientifically sound solutions backed by naturally powerful ingredients

No matter the severity, women largely agree that their menopause symptoms take a toll: Nearly half of the women surveyed for the 2024 State of Menopause say that menopause has disrupted their daily lives. Yet, far too many — up to 80% of those experiencing hot flashes and night sweats — don't seek treatment.

"Suffering is not necessary or acceptable," Dr. Dweck stressed. When menopause hits, she points out, "so many women are at the top of their professional games or their personal aspirations. This is no time to let symptoms go unmanaged and interfere."

Dr. Dweck was drawn to Bonafide's mission of supporting non-drug management options for menopause that utilize naturally derived ingredients — without compromising on safety or science — because she noticed a trend in patients asking for hormone-free and prescription-free approaches to symptom management.

"When we talk about natural, we mean using ingredients that are found in nature — and are also well studied," Dr. Dweck explained. "We know we need facts and data to have faith in the safety and efficacy of the products we are recommending."

## Better sex, better sleep

Aside from their unique commitment to using ingredients found in nature, Bonafide's rigorous process to bring menopause relief to market closely resembles the type of scientific model used for pharmaceutical drug development, from research and design to clinical testing.

Revaree® was Bonafide's first product to combat vaginal dryness, a common menopause symptom that can cause all-around discomfort and interfere with intimacy, day-to-day comfort, and



self-esteem. The newest offering in this line, Revaree Plus, includes twice as much hyaluronic acid as the original formula and soothing sweet almond oil for extra-strength relief from vaginal dryness, everyday comfort, and pain-free intimacy.

Looking to get better sleep as March (AKA Sleep Awareness Month) approaches? Bonafide's Thermella® is a hormone-free, over-the-counter oral supplement scientifically studied to be effective at managing moderate to severe hot flashes and night sweats, which can lead to a more comfortable, restful sleep.\*

During this Valentine's Day season, whether you're the one picking out presents or the one hoping for a sweet surprise, consider a (virtual) stop by Bonafide for conversation starters, doctor-vetted blogs, and innovative hormone-free products. Symptom relief, education, communication, and empowerment — what could be sexier than that?

Written by **Emily Rose**

*\*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.*



INTERVIEW WITH  
**Alyssa Dweck,**  
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**FACOG, MSCP**  
Chief Medical  
Officer,  
Bonafide



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## Educating Women on Hormone Use During Menopause

Menopause is natural, and understanding hormone use during menopause can bring relief to women during the 7-to-14-year transition.

**H**ormones are such a beneficial thing for women,” said Patricia Geraghty, FNP-BC, women’s health nurse practitioner and the medical director of Each Woman’s Health in Walnut Creek, California. She calls hormones the gold standard for treating menopause issues, including sleep disruption, disabling hot flashes, and moodiness.

### Understanding hormones

Hormones can help women manage symptoms during menopause, such as hot flashes, disrupted sleep, racing brain, fatigue, and moodiness.

Geraghty said women should consider weaning off of hormones or stopping them about 10 years after menopause, or by age 59. She also said women who have a uterus can use estrogen and progesterone to protect their

uterus, but there’s a risk of breast cancer when it’s used for a long time.

Still, the biggest risk of an adverse event from hormone use is a blood clot, but Geraghty explains that typically women in their 50s don’t have a very high baseline risk for blood clots. Plus, with transdermal dosing, such as a patch, gel, or spray, the risk of blood clots from hormones is eliminated.

### Continuing education

Geraghty wants patients and clinicians to be informed about menopause. One of the biggest challenges is how little medical professionals are taught about the topic.

“There’s a tremendous amount of undereducation on menopause in medical schools,” she said. “The median amount of time teaching menopause in the curriculum is one hour. So, women really have trouble finding someone that can be informed to provide them care.”

That’s why she wrote and edited the book “Each Women’s Menopause: An Evidence Based Resource,” which is directed at health-care providers. “I want them to be at least aware, and then we need to facilitate them acquiring the information.”

Written by **Kristen Castillo**

## Menopause: How to Rock the Hormone Symphony

Anxiety. Itchy skin. Hot flashes. Insomnia. Heart palpitations.

Symptoms of perimenopause and menopause can rock your world when you least expect it. Any of these signs could be related to a decrease in essential hormones you’ve produced all your life – progesterone, testosterone, and estrogen – a disruption that can occur up to 10 years before your periods end.

### Face the Music: Nothing replenishes hormones except hormones.

Choosing a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise, superfoods, and supplements is a good way to optimize how you feel, but make no mistake – once you hit menopause, your hormones won’t fully replenish themselves.

Hormone replacement therapy addresses the root causes of symptoms related to this major life transition.

### Belmar Pharmacy has been helping women rock the hormone symphony since 1985.

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# Understanding the Menopause Transition

While menopause is defined only after a woman's period has stopped for 12 consecutive months, hormonal changes and symptoms are often incremental.

**A**lthough the term “menopause” is often used loosely to describe all midlife changes, menopause transitions in stages (perimenopause, menopause, postmenopause) and looks different for everyone.

A “typical” menopause experience is often described as developing symptoms and ending menstruation in your mid to late 40s, although women may experience menopause earlier or later due to factors like chemotherapy, surgical damage to or removal of ovaries, genetic factors, or certain chronic health conditions. While every woman's symptoms are different, common symptoms include vasomotor symptoms (VMS) of hot flashes and night sweats, changes in mood or premenstrual syndrome, irritability, depressive symptoms, increased anxiety, sleep disturbances and insomnia, brain fog, and genitourinary symptoms, such as vaginal dryness, irritation, and urinary incontinence.

Symptom severity and duration can also differ among women of different races and ethnicities. For example, studies show Japanese women experience 4.8 years of VMS on average, compared to white women, whose average symptom duration is 6.5 years, Hispanic women at 8.9 years, and African American women at 10.1 years.

Currently, 73% of women are not treating their menopause symptoms, and only 17% speak to their significant other about them. Because every woman's experience is so unique, having regular conversations with healthcare providers and loved ones, as well as keeping a personal record of symptoms, are key to healthily navigating the menopause transition.

There is ample opportunity to break down the stigma of menopause and better navigate this natural life stage.

Written by **Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR)**

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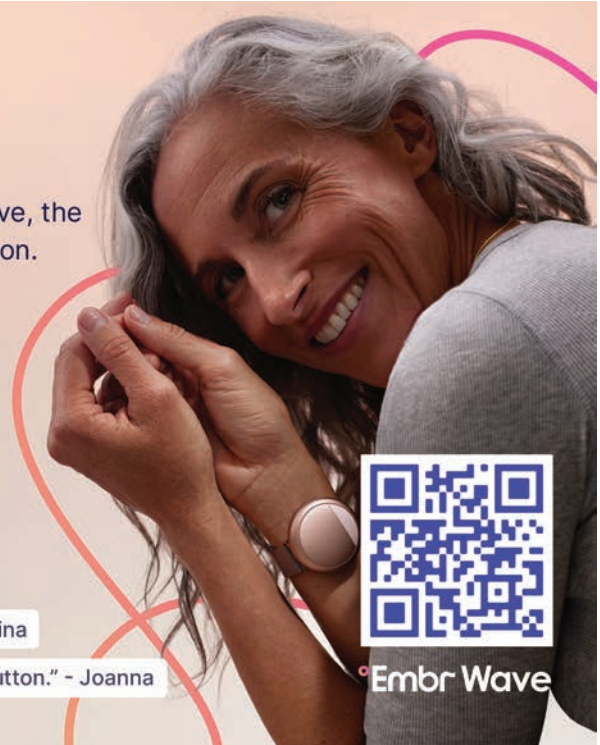


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# The New Era of **Managing Your Health**

A transformative shift in healthcare is taking root — one that aligns with the wisdom of Hippocrates: “The greatest medicine of all is to teach people how not to need it.”



Adobe Stock | Photo courtesy of EVEXIAS

**H**ow would it make you feel knowing that healthcare has been relatively the same for generations? For over a century, medicine has largely operated on a one-size-fits-all model, but the good news is that a new approach is putting patients back in the driver’s seat.

From the mid-1800s to the late 1900s, spanning over 150 years, medicine largely relied on a streamlined methodology based on symptom-based treatment and “one-size-fits-all” solutions, often neglecting individual well-being. Many patients have heralded a liberated approach to their healthcare, giving them a sense of satisfaction and ownership over

their own well-being.

Take Jason, for example: a busy professional whose declining energy threatened to derail his career and personal life. After starting hormone replacement therapy (HRT) with EvexiPEL, he’s now thriving, balancing work, college, and even playing football. “HRT changed everything,” he said.

## **The limitations of reactive healthcare**

Historically, healthcare has operated on a reactive basis: individuals seek medical attention after symptoms appear, receive a diagnosis, and begin treatment. While addressing immediate concerns, this approach often

“True healthcare reform begins with **EMPOWERING** individuals to **TAKE CONTROL** of their health through education and preventive measures,”

– Dr. Terri DeNeui, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC

fails to uncover the root causes of illnesses, contributing to chronic conditions, medication overuse, and a cascade of side effects that accelerate aging and disease. This system, while effective in treating immediate symptoms, results in prolonged medication reliance, hidden side

effects, and a vicious cycle of escalating healthcare costs.

And those medications? Many have triggered a snowball of side effects, paving the way for chronic illnesses and premature aging. As Terri DeNeui, DNP, APRN-BC, founder of EVEXIAS Health Solutions, advocates, the time has come to break this cycle.

## **Embracing proactive health management**

Today, a transformative shift in healthcare is taking root — one that emphasizes prevention, personalization, and total body wellness. This approach aligns with the wisdom of Hippocrates, who once stated, “The greatest medicine of all is to teach people

how not to need it.” Imagine a world where your practitioner isn’t just there to treat sickness but to guide you toward optimal health and help prevent disease before it begins.

Dr. DeNeui is also the creator of the EvexiPEL Method, the flagship therapy of EVEXIAS Health Solutions. Her work is at the forefront of this movement. Her mission is clear: to train practitioners to shift away from prescribing “a pill for every ill,” and instead focus on the whole person. This involves examining labs, symptoms, and underlying causes to create a truly personalized plan for healing and wellness. “True healthcare reform begins with empowering individuals to take control of their health through education and preventive measures,” she explained.

According to the National Library of Medicine, “Linking discovery science and its translatable innovations beyond reactive disease intervention to proactive prevention will maximize society’s returns, creating the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people globally.”

### The role of integrative medicine

With a deeper understanding of the human body comes a yearning for more proactive treatment. Patients are looking to partner with their doctors to create personalized plans for their wellness.

Integrative medicine plays a pivotal role in this healthcare transformation by combining conventional medical practices with evidence-based complementary therapies. This holistic approach



INTERVIEW WITH  
**Dr. Terri DeNeui,**  
DNP, APRN-BC,  
Founder, EVEXIAS  
Health Solutions

addresses the physical, emotional, and environmental factors influencing health, aiming to treat the whole person rather than isolated symptoms.

Dr. DeNeui emphasizes the importance of integrative medicine, stating, “By looking at the whole body, labs, symptoms, and addressing the root cause, we can provide more effective and personalized care.”

### Hormone optimization: A cornerstone of wellness

A key component of integrative health is hormone optimization. Hormones regulate numerous bodily functions, and imbalances can lead to symptoms like fatigue, mood swings, and weight gain. HRT, particularly through methods like the EvexiPEL, offers an effective solution for restoring hormonal balance.

**“By looking at the whole body, labs, symptoms, and addressing the root cause, we can provide more EFFECTIVE and PERSONALIZED care.”**

— Dr. Terri DeNeui, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC

Dr. DeNeui, a recognized thought leader in hormone optimization, developed the EvexiPEL Method after years of treating patients with hormone imbalances. This method utilizes hormone pellets to provide consistent and individualized hormone delivery, enhancing patient outcomes and quality of life.

There have been major improvements in her patients’ lives when taking this new perspective on healthcare. Partnering with patients based on individual

needs, lifestyles, and feelings. Patients now understand that they know what it feels like to be healthy, and there is no compromise when it comes to reaching the goal of optimal health. Starting with understanding hormone levels has had groundbreaking results when it comes to improving quality of life.

### Patient empowerment through education

With increased access to information comes a need for experts to categorize, sort, and further educate on which information is relevant to the patient. Central to this new healthcare paradigm is patient education. By equipping individuals with knowledge about their health, they become active participants in their wellness journeys. “YouTube University” is not enough to know exactly why mood swings are getting more erratic, bloating is a constant struggle, and sex drive isn’t what it once was.

Patients need relevant information to sort through common lies and the temptation to self-diagnose based on symptoms. Remember, symptom-based diagnoses alone are outdated. There is now access to relevant information for more personalized care. Dr. DeNeui’s book, “Hormone Havoc,” serves as a resource for understanding hormone health and dispelling common misconceptions, empowering readers to make informed decisions.

### Testimonials: Real-life transformations

From the mouths of the patients, a lifestyle pivot in the way they perceive healthcare can have a substantial influence on their overall quality of life.

The impact of this proactive, integrative approach is evident in patient testimonials. For instance, Gina experienced profound fatigue that hindered her daily activities

and led to weight gain. After undergoing personalized care focusing on hormone optimization and lifestyle changes, she regained her energy and well-being, expressing, “There’s nothing I won’t do... I just did a triathlon. I promise you, I wouldn’t have done that triathlon if it wasn’t for EvexiPEL.”

Gina didn’t just look to get her symptoms treated, but took a deeper dive into the root causes of the noticeable decline in her quality of life. Starting with asking direct questions and taking the time to seek out answers. She didn’t wait until there was nothing she could do; she was proactive and sought out a professional, and took a holistic approach to her treatment. It’s not enough to take medicine and go live the life that led to the problem; lifestyle changes must be made to keep from being reactive.

### The future of healthcare

The shift toward proactive health management signifies a promising future where individuals are empowered to prevent disease and achieve optimal wellness. Organizations like EVEXIAS Health Solutions are at the forefront of this movement, educating practitioners and patients alike on the benefits of integrative medicine and hormone optimization.

By embracing this philosophy, the new era of healthcare fosters a society where health is maintained through informed choices, preventive care, and holistic well-being.

Written by **EVEXIAS Health Solutions**



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# Brooke Shields on Embracing Age (and Why You Should, Too)

Aging is a dirty word, but actress, model, and author Brooke Shields says it doesn't have to be that way.

In her new book “Brooke Shields Is Not Allowed to Get Old,” the entrepreneur, actress, model, and mother of two is encouraging women approaching menopause to lean in and embrace — rather than cower or resist — this phase of life.

## Offering a fresh perspective

One of the biggest myths about aging, Shields told Mediaplanet, is that it is a signal of the end. “Women at this age are just beginning a new era of life,” said Shields, 59. “This age has a stigma, but I’m so proud I got this far.”

After giving birth to her daughter Rowan in 2003, Shields penned a memoir, “There Was A Little Girl,” about how she overcame postpartum depression. At the time, she realized she couldn’t be the only person experiencing that struggle — and the same understanding struck her when she began perimenopause, a transitional phase where periods become irregular then eventually stop, signaling the end of menstruation (AKA menopause). According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, symptoms include hot flashes, sleep trouble, mood changes, and vaginal dryness.

“No one was talking about [these symptoms],” she told WebMD. “So, again, I thought, ‘I cannot be the only female in the world ever to have experienced menopause symptoms.’ The more I looked at it, the more I realized that people are ashamed. And the

messaging out there is that we should be.”

To converse with other women in their 40s, Shields started an online forum called Beginning Is Now, which has garnered millions of followers and eventually evolved into a beauty brand for this demographic. Shields decided to call it Commence.

“This age has challenges, too (different ones), and you will get through it as well. **Handle them with as much grace as you can, and look ahead.**”

“In French, ‘commence’ means ‘to begin,’” Shields told WebMD. “To me, it’s a word of incredible promise because it allows more to happen. And that’s what we want to ask women in this phase of life. What are you beginning? There’s growth, there’s excitement, there’s change in beginnings.”

## Galvanizing women

That’s not the picture society paints of aging. It’s far more cynical, and encourages women to shrink or recede into the shadows



Brooke Shields | Photo by Pamela Hanson

in midlife. Almost as a rebellion against that notion, between her business ventures and family time, Shields is reveling in midlife. “The most rewarding thing,” she told Mediaplanet, “is knowing my children want to be around me. I can’t believe I got so lucky.”

One of the worst age-related biases Shields has faced is that “somehow in the eyes of the public, my worth has diminished — when in reality, it has tripled,” she said.

That’s not to say perimenopause is easy. As Shields has shared on social media, per Prevention, being a woman — no

matter the phase — can be tiring. During the menopausal transition, hormonal fluctuations (of estrogen and progesterone among them) are to blame, according to the Endocrine Society.

Shields acknowledged these challenges with Mediaplanet, but offered some reassurance to women at this stage of life: “Puberty sucked, but you got through it,” she said. “This age has challenges, too (different ones), and you will get through it as well. Handle them with as much grace as you can, and look ahead.”

Written by **Melinda Carter**



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# Maryann Walsh on the Role of Diet in Fertility and Pregnancy

Maryann Walsh, a registered dietitian and member of Women in Nutraceuticals, explains how your diet and fertility are intrinsically linked.

**W**hen Maryann Walsh chose to have a baby without a partner, she had to make some changes to her life. She was 35 years old and undergoing fertility treatment. To ensure she was doing everything she could to get pregnant, Walsh focused on her nutrition. As a registered dietitian, Walsh understood the important link between fertility and her diet.

“As soon as a woman knows that she wants to get pregnant or is even thinking about planning to get pregnant, she should make sure that she is taking good care of herself nutrition-wise,” Walsh said.

She got pregnant and gave birth to her daughter at 36. Walsh is now passing on what she learned.

## What to eat

Walsh stresses the importance of a well-balanced diet that focuses on healthy fats, lean proteins, and micronutrients.

For healthy fats, Walsh recommends olive

oil, almonds, and avocado. When it comes to lean protein, chicken and lean beef should be your go-to. If you’re vegetarian, you can get your protein from beans and soy products.

As for micronutrients, Walsh recommends that your diet focus on zinc and folate. However, B6, B12, vitamin C, and vitamin D should also be present in your diet. Overall, the Mediterranean diet is a great guide to ensure you’re hitting all these marks.

“There’s a reason the Mediterranean diet is always at the top of the lists,” Walsh said. “Even if you don’t have a perfect day of eating, you’re still getting a variety of nutrients.”

## Listen to your body

If you’re hoping to get pregnant — especially in the next three months — Walsh recommends avoiding excessive alcohol intake. You should also stay away from excess sugar and refined carbohydrates — like white bread and pasta — because they can alter your blood sugar regulation, which is vital for fertility.



Maryann Walsh | Photo by Hannah Dougan, Lifestamp Photography

While no diet guarantees a pregnancy, Walsh says it’s all about taking care of your body so that it’s at its strongest.

“The best we can do is to put our body in the best place it can be to get pregnant and last full-term,” Walsh said.

Written by **Frank James**

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## The Necessary Nutrients for Improving Fertility

Many factors can lead to infertility in both men and women, and the condition requires proper medical diagnosis.

**L**ifestyle factors like smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, stress, and obesity negatively impact fertility. Delayed conception age and exposure to environmental pollutants also affect gamete quality and quantity.

Diet plays a crucial role in female fertility. Diets high in trans fats, refined carbohydrates, and added sugars can harm fertility, while those rich in fiber, omega-3 fatty acids, plant-based proteins, and essential vitamins and minerals can enhance it. Key nutrients for improving fertility include folic acid, calcium, iodine, iron, selenium, vitamin D, and vitamin B-12. Sometimes, supplementation is necessary to meet these nutritional needs.

Anemia and folate deficiency can cause secondary infertility. The World Health Organization reports that 40% of women of reproductive age suffer from iron deficiency anemia, which should be treated before infertility treatments. Iron deficiency reduces oxygen supply to tissues, including the ovaries and uterus, and is linked to ovulatory infertility, miscarriage, low birth weight, and preterm delivery. It can also cause implantation failure, leading to premature birth.

During pregnancy, iron needs increase, and deficiency is associated with higher risks of placental problems, spontaneous abortion, and premature birth.

Older women face additional risks when trying to conceive. Egg quality deteriorates with age, and inflammatory

processes and other health issues become more likely. Bone and muscle recovery during and after pregnancy may be slower. Ensuring adequate nutrient intake is crucial to minimize risks at conception and during pregnancy.

Mineral supplements, like iron, can pose challenges due to reactivity, taste, and side effects. Microencapsulation improves the stability, bioavailability, and effectiveness of these nutrients, reducing adverse effects and enhancing consumer adherence to supplements.



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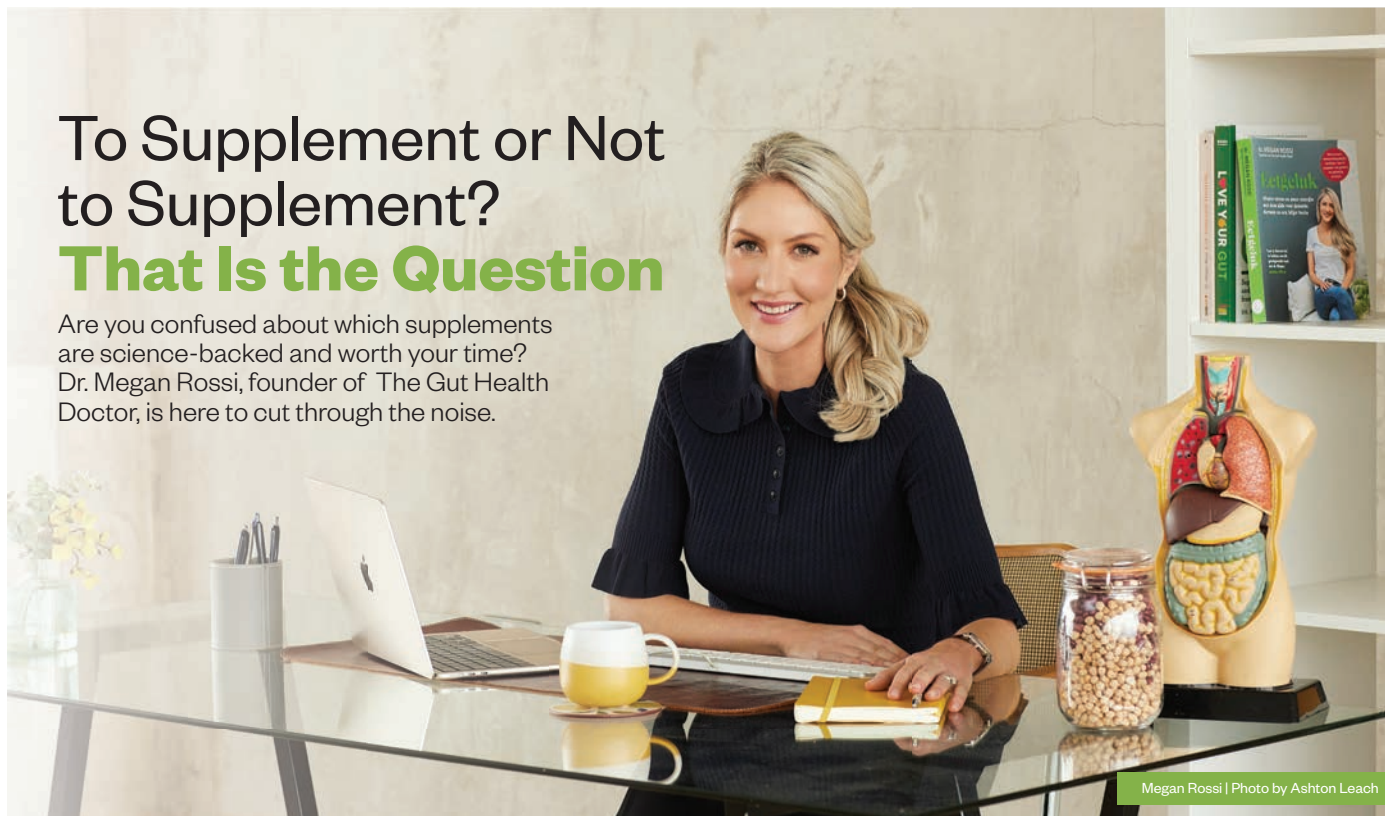
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# To Supplement or Not to Supplement?

## That Is the Question

Are you confused about which supplements are science-backed and worth your time? Dr. Megan Rossi, founder of The Gut Health Doctor, is here to cut through the noise.



Megan Rossi | Photo by Ashton Leach

**W**hile it's exciting to see the growing awareness of gut health, it's also frustrating to watch companies hop on the trend with misleading products that lack scientific backing. The truth is, feeling and looking your best doesn't need to be complicated or expensive.

For most people, optimal gut health cannot be achieved with supplements alone, but instead requires a plant-rich, diverse diet that acts as a natural fertilizer for your "good" gut bacteria, helping them thrive.

### Probiotics

There is strong evidence to support a number of condition-specific probiotics that can help manage specific symptoms or conditions. However, here is the thing: You need to take the right strain (i.e., type of bacteria), at the right time (e.g., if you need to go on antibiotics), and you need

to take it in the right way (i.e., for the right length of time and dose).

For example, research has shown that if you need to take antibiotics, then taking the probiotic *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG throughout and for a week afterward significantly reduces your risk of antibiotic-associated diarrhea, which affects as many as one-third of patients. There are also several other evidence-backed probiotics available for female health, infant colic, and cold and flu, to name a few. To learn more about the science of probiotics, you can join my free probiotic webinar.

### Psyllium husk

For those struggling with bowel irregularities, psyllium husk is a simple, evidence-based supplement that can help manage both constipation and diarrhea. Research, including studies from King's College London, shows psyllium is unique because gut

bacteria don't digest it like most fibers. Instead, it absorbs water, helping soften hard stools or thicken loose ones. Psyllium can also alleviate other symptoms, like incomplete evacuation — the feeling that your bowels aren't fully emptied. Start with half a tablespoon (around 3g) daily, and gradually increase to a maximum of 3 tablespoons per day, ensuring you add an extra 150ml of water per tablespoon to support psyllium's role.

### Vitamin D

Vitamin D is another supplement worth considering not just for your immune health (as commonly advertised) but your gut health, too — particularly during the darker months. In places like the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, limited sunlight in the autumn and winter makes it challenging to maintain adequate levels. Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) is the most effective form for

raising your levels according to a review of 20 studies (compared to vitamin D2, often found in plant foods like mushrooms). Also, vitamin D is fat-soluble, meaning it's best taken with a meal that includes healthy fats to aid absorption. Think oily fish (like salmon or mackerel), extra virgin olive oil, avocado, nuts, seeds, or full-fat yogurt.

As a general rule, aim to meet your nutritional needs through a diverse, plant-rich diet (think 30 plant points per week), fermented foods, and oily fish before turning to supplements. If you have specific health concerns or suspect you might need supplementation, consult a healthcare professional or registered dietitian who can provide personalized, science-backed advice tailored to your needs.

Written by **Megan Rossi, Ph.D., RD, APD, Founder, The Gut Health Doctor (@theguthealthdoctor)**

# Aging Well Is a Science. Here's How to Do It Right

What if you could feel 20 years younger? Many Americans are living longer, but the goal shouldn't just be to add years — the secret sauce is added vitality. That's why the focus on "healthspan," the number of years you stay strong and active, is redefining how we approach aging.

Instead of assuming that our later years will be marked by declining health and fading enjoyment, more and more people are seeking new ways to supplement their health.

Healthy aging is the name of the game, but the gap between lifespan (about 77.5 years) and healthspan (around 62 years) shows the limits of a healthy lifestyle and even high-quality medical care. Replacing some of what you're losing as you age can increase and even optimize your healthspan, and that's driving a surging interest in supplements that help support healthy aging.

"Sometimes people think healthy aging is about, 'Oh, I want to look younger. I want to have fewer wrinkles,'" said Rachel Jones, M.S., RDN, executive vice president and chief merchandising and science officer at GNC. "But you also just want to feel good. You want to live your life. You want to feel stronger. You want to optimize. Finding supplements backed by science can help you do just that."

The challenge for many consumers is knowing which supplement retailers they can trust — and whether the supplements they offer are safe, tested, and effective.

## Longevity and healthspan

"There are so many things we can do, especially with supplements, to help extend and lengthen that period of time — your

healthspan," Jones explained. "There's a lot of research showing that a healthy foundation of things like vitamins, minerals, and unique antioxidants can help protect your cells, heart, brain, and joints."

Figuring out what supplements to take can be challenging because the list of potentially beneficial supplements is long — from familiar, old-school vitamins and minerals to things like fish oil, which can help maintain healthy blood pressure and lower the risk of cardiovascular diseases; lutein, which supports skin and eye health; or supplements to maintain hormonal balance.

"Hormone balance is important for longevity and healthy aging, too," Jones noted. "Both men and women start to see shifts in hormones starting in their 30s. For men, testosterone begins to decline, and you see myriad issues with that — decreased energy, decreased sex drive, it impacts your strength and lean muscle mass, the list goes on."

"For women, the shifts in hormones result in their metabolism slowing down, shifts in body composition, and a decline in bone health."

While some supplements can be generally beneficial to anyone, the key is taking a personalized approach — and being able to trust the retailer you're dealing with.

## Science-backed

When investigating the benefits



Photos courtesy of GNC

of supplements for healthy aging, perhaps the most important thing is knowing that you can trust the company you're purchasing from and its products.

“

But you also just want to feel good. You want to live your life. You want to feel stronger. You want to optimize. **Finding supplements backed by science can help you do just that.**

"Consumers trying to figure out what supplements are right for them should look for trusted brands with experience, and make sure you're going to evidence-based sources for

information," so they can choose products and companies that have high-quality standards, Jones advised.

Things to look for when seeking a supplements retailer include whether the company pays for third-party verification on its products, whether it invests in clinical studies and research, and whether it has credentialed experts vetting and designing its products — all things GNC has been doing for more than 90 years.

"GNC sets the scientific bar higher than other brands and companies," Jones stated flatly. "We go above and beyond what's required from a regulatory perspective, just to make sure our products work, to ensure there's truth in labeling."

GNC has a rigorous screening process, including 150 quality checks alongside robust third-party verification to ensure the effectiveness and safety of its products. "If we say the product





provides a benefit, it's true," Jones noted. "We have a commitment to follow regulations and the law — but we also have a commitment to the truth. And we're very choosy — we have a 'No-No' list of over 300 ingredients. If those ingredients are in a potential product or exceed the levels we've set, we won't carry it."

One thing consumers should consider is the resources required to ensure this level of quality and efficacy — a company that pops up on social media one day likely lacks the ability to pay for third-party verification or expert advisers, or to commit to high quality standards.

### Personalized

"We're all different," Jones explained. "From our genetic makeup to our diets, habits, lifestyle, or any conditions we might be dealing with — everybody has their own personal needs and goals."

Understanding this need for a personalized approach yields tremendous benefits. For example, everyone can benefit from a multivitamin to some extent, but GNC offers more than 20 varieties to match different goals and needs. When it comes to healthy aging, for example, GNC offers products like their Mega Men 50 Plus and Women's One Daily 50 Plus Vitapak programs, which are expert-curated daily regimens of supplements specifically designed for men and women age 50 or older.

"These vitapak programs feature clinically studied multivitamins designed for that particular age group," Jones noted. "They incorporate the right levels of vitamins and minerals, as well as specialized antioxidants that can help support you and optimize your healthspan."

That personalized approach extends to the retail experience in GNC stores, which are staffed with coaches who can guide consumers to products that meet their needs.

"The training program for these coaches was designed in collaboration with GNC's group of 25 credentialed experts," Jones said. "It's science- and evidence-based, and the training staff and coaches have access to those experts any time they need help. A lot of that training focuses on identifying the basic questions they need to ask in order to personalize a supplement plan for someone, much like a dietitian is trained to work with people in nutritional counseling."

GNC backs this up in two ways: a money-back guarantee that allows customers to bring back products for any reason, no questions asked, and a rigorous commitment to science.

### The GNC difference

One reason Jones knows so much about the supplement space is the presence GNC enjoys in it — they have "skin in the game" — and

the fact that she's been with the company for more than 20 years.

"GNC has been around since 1935 — we're a mission-driven company committed to helping people live well, and we have 90 years of experience," she said proudly. "We also have the expertise — aside from having more than 40 internal experts, we've got a network of doctors, scientists, universities, regulatory experts, and suppliers."

Many of GNC's products are also exclusive to the company, in part because roughly half their products were developed in-house by their own experts, and in part because they're a global enterprise. Having relationships around the world gives GNC insight into potential new products and the ability to source ingredients. "That's why we're able to sometimes have the first and best solutions for things like healthy aging and more," Jones noted.

When it comes to supplements for healthy aging and having the longest possible healthspan, having a partner like that is crucial. "Everyone at GNC believes in the mission of helping consumers live well," Jones said. "It's truly embedded in everything that we do, and we've been doing it for a long time."

Ninety years of science, 150+ quality checks. GNC sets the standard for healthy aging.

Written by **Jeff Somers**



**Everyone at GNC believes in the mission of helping consumers live well. It's truly embedded in everything that we do, and we've been doing it for a long time.**



INTERVIEW WITH  
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Executive Vice  
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Science Officer,  
GNC



Learn how to optimize your healthspan with expert insights and proven supplements — start at **GNC.com**

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# A Caregiver's Guide to Understanding **Urinary Retention and Incontinence**

Understanding and addressing incontinence and urinary retention can help break down stigmas associated with these common conditions.

**A**s a caregiver, you play a key role in observing your loved one's symptoms and behavior, and helping to coordinate communication with their doctor. Incontinence and urinary retention are completely opposite problems and something to watch out for.

Incontinence makes it hard to hold your urine, while urinary retention means you are unable to completely empty your bladder. Although common, both conditions are considered taboo subjects often associated with infancy, losing one's faculties, or old age.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, urinary retention affects 10% of men over 70 and 30% of men over 80. The National Association for Continence reports that incontinence affects more than 25 million adults in the United States.

## Knowing the facts

Here are some of the key myths about incontinence and urinary retention — and the facts:

- Myth: Incontinence is an inevitable part of aging.
- Truth: While the risk increases with age, it's not a normal part of aging and can often be managed with lifestyle changes and treatment.
- Myth: Only women experience incontinence, and urinary retention affects only men.
- Truth: While incontinence is more common in women — due to pregnancy, childbirth, and hormonal changes, among other factors — men can also experience incontinence from an enlarged prostate. Urinary retention is



much more common in men, but women can also be affected.

- Myth: Restricting fluids is a good way to manage it.
- Truth: Limiting fluid intake can worsen



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the problem by concentrating urine, which irritates the bladder.

- Myth: Incontinence is not a serious issue.
- Truth: Due to social and personal limitations, it can significantly impact quality

of life and other health issues like infection and skin impairment.

- Myth: With regard to urinary retention, holding urine in causes urinary tract infections (UTI).
- Truth: Although consistently holding urine for an extended period can be problematic, doing it occasionally is not a major contributor to a UTI.

### Overcoming stigma

Despite being common conditions, there is a stigma to bladder control issues, leading to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and isolation. This can make it difficult for people to talk about it and get the help they need.

The stigma arises from factors like discomfort discussing bodily functions, the perception of this being private and potentially embarrassing, age-related stereotypes, an association with uncleanness, and the perceived loss of control. This can lead to shame, anxiety, withdrawal from

social interactions for fear of accidents, and reluctance to seek help, worsening the condition physically, emotionally, and socially.

Education is one way to help us overcome this stigma. Open communication and learning the causes, types, and treatment options make it less of a taboo topic. Maintaining a loved one's dignity is also key for caregivers. Use discreet products for someone with incontinence so they feel less self-conscious. Respect their privacy. Encourage medical advice, which could include physical therapy treatment, and provide emotional support while promoting independence. By fostering a compassionate and understanding approach, individuals with incontinence can maintain a better quality of life without shame.

It's all about finding the right balance between offering support and ensuring your loved one feels as independent and dignified as possible. Most importantly, it's about letting them know you're there for them, no matter what.

Written by **Marvell Adams Jr, CEO, Caregiver Action Network**

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## Aging in Place, Dealing With Incontinence

For an aging population, incontinence is the new normal—but a better generation of products makes dealing with it easier.

**T**en thousand people are turning 65 each day — and many intend to age in place rather than enter an institutional setting, a trend that has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic. But even so-called “super agers” face challenges, including incontinence.

“Due to leaks, odor, or noise, incontinence can be a very isolating condition,” said David Spain, CEO of Parentgiving, a premium adult care resource.

### More than age

Incontinence affects people suffering from bladder, prostate, and colon conditions, as well as the rapidly growing

population dealing with dementia and Alzheimer's disease, who are often unable to communicate their need for a bathroom.

Historically, choices for adult diapers and similar products have been limited — but new technology, advanced materials, and vastly improved manufacturing are changing the game.

### Better choices

When people first start experiencing incontinence, they turn to off-the-shelf adult care products at a “big box” store. These products often contain lower-grade super absorbent polymers (SAP) and less fluff, which limits absorbency and performance.

“When it comes to incontinence garments, fit is critical,” Spain explained. “If it sags, or has gaping openings at the legs, or doesn't feel good, it won't work.”

As incontinence progresses, the

desire to age in place drives people to seek higher-quality products — like Parentgiving's premium brand, Dry Direct Adult Diapers, which are made in Italy using premium materials and thoughtful design. “The panels, waistbands, and components are softer and silkier,” Spain explained. This enables longer and more comfortable wear times, reducing the number of changes necessary — a godsend for busy, overwhelmed caregivers. “We use copious amounts of fluff and a higher grade of SAP,” he added, “ensuring odor control and better absorbency over time.”


For Spain, it's all about quality of life — for everyone involved. “Caregivers recognize that a better class of adult care product means fewer changes, fewer leaks, less laundering, more comfort — and more dignity.”

Written by **Jeff Somers**




INTERVIEW WITH  
**David Spain**  
CEO, Parentgiving

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