

# Joint Pain and Muscles

## Joint pain and misdiagnosis:

Many women find their joints suddenly become stiff and painful during perimenopause and menopause, and it is also harder to build up and maintain muscle. Often menopausal women get a diagnosis from their doctor of “fibromyalgia” – all over body pain, fatigue and sleep problems – and sometimes this is just caused by lack of hormones, particularly oestrogen. The problem can often be improved by hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

## Loss of Oestrogen and testosterone:

Joints have oestrogen receptors which are affected by the loss of oestrogen in menopause, and pain in joints can affect women’s ability to exercise, leading to muscle loss and weight gain. Oestrogen protects joints and reduces inflammation, but when estrogen levels drop, inflammation can increase, the risk of osteoporosis and osteoarthritis can go up and make it painful to move freely.

As testosterone falls in women along with oestrogen and progesterone, some women also find it harder to maintain muscle strength, and again, testosterone replacement at normal female levels can help.

## Can yoga help?

Some women find that changing their form of exercise can also help relieve joint and muscle pain. Yoga is a fantastic exercise for the entire body. It can also improve some of the symptoms of the menopause, including sleep disturbance, fatigue, low mood and anxiety.

Muscle tone and bone density reduce during the perimenopause and menopause, so doing regular yoga practice can also be beneficial for these. Some women find it helps reduce hot flushes too. Core muscle strength improves, including pelvic floor muscles, which often weaken as hormone levels reduce.