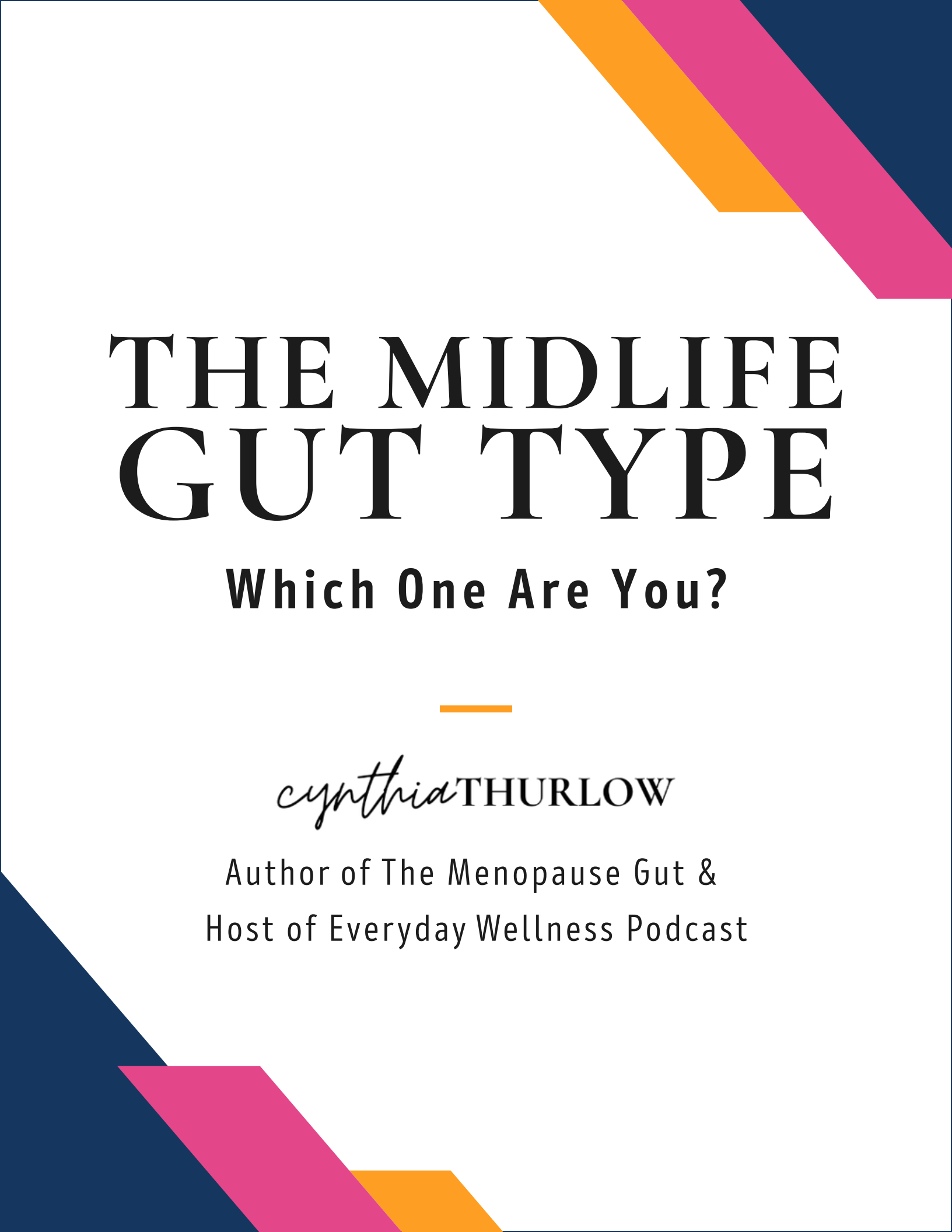




THE MIDLIFE GUT TYPE

Which One Are You?

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YOUR SYMPTOMS AREN'T RANDOM

They're a Pattern

If you're a woman over 35, chances are you've experienced some version of this: you wake up bloated for no reason. Your energy crashes at 2 PM. Your skin is doing things it hasn't done since your twenties. You're gaining weight without changing anything. Your digestion is unpredictable. Your sleep is broken. Your mood swings feel like someone else is driving.

And every time you bring it up, someone tells you it's "just aging" or "just hormones."

It's not "just" anything. These symptoms are signals. And most of them trace back to the same place: your gut.

THE GUT-HORMONE CONNECTION

Your gut microbiome does far more than digest food. It produces neurotransmitters that affect your mood and cognition. It contains a collection of bacteria called the estrobolome that directly regulates how your body processes estrogen. It manages inflammation levels throughout your entire body. And it determines how well you absorb every vitamin, mineral, and nutrient you eat.

In midlife, when estrogen and progesterone begin to shift, your gut microbiome shifts with them. The bacterial balance changes. The gut lining can become more permeable. Digestive function slows. And the symptoms that show up? They depend on which part of your gut ecosystem was affected most.

That's why two women going through the same hormonal transition can have completely different symptoms. It's not random. It's their gut type.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read through the four gut types below. You may identify strongly with one, or you may see yourself in two or three. That's normal. Most women have a primary type with elements of others.

For each type, you'll find:

- What it looks and feels like
- What's actually happening in your body
- What to prioritize first
- Where to go deeper in The Menopause Gut

Start with your primary gut type. Follow the priorities. And know that understanding the pattern is the first step to breaking it.

TYPE 1

THE BLOATED & SLUGGISH GUT

"I feel heavy, slow, and puffy no matter what I eat."



This is the most common gut type in midlife. You used to eat whatever you wanted and feel fine. Now, even “healthy” meals leave you bloated. Your digestion feels like it’s running at half speed. Constipation is your new normal. You feel heavy in your body in a way that doesn’t match what you’re eating. And the weight around your midsection showed up without warning and won’t leave.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

- Frequent bloating, especially after meals
- Constipation or irregular bowel movements
- Unexplained weight gain, particularly around the midsection
- Feeling full or heavy even after small meals
- Low energy, especially in the afternoon
- Puffiness in face, hands, or ankles
- Feeling like your metabolism “stopped working”

WHAT’S HAPPENING

Declining estrogen and progesterone slows gut motility, which means food moves through your digestive tract more slowly. This creates a slow down: food sits longer, has the potential to ferment more, and can produce excess gas. At the same time, lower progesterone levels reduce the anti-inflammatory protection your gut lining used to have. The result is sluggish digestion, a bit of increased water retention, and a shift in how your body stores fat.

Your gut bacteria are also changing. The part of your microbiome that processes estrogen, the estrobolome, may work less efficiently as diversity shifts, which may magnify symptoms including brain fog, bloating, energy changes, and more.

WHAT TO PRIORITIZE FIRST

1. Track fiber, then slowly (to avoid worsening bloating) increase intake to 25-30g daily. e.g. If you are at 10g a day, move to 12-15g, etc. Focus on prebiotic fibers: artichokes, asparagus, garlic, onions, leeks, and berries.
2. Hydrate with electrolytes before caffeine every morning. Dehydration worsens constipation and bloating.
3. Finish eating 3 hours before bed to give your digestive system time to process.
4. Add fermented foods: sauerkraut, kimchi, or unsweetened yogurt. Start with 1-2 tablespoons daily.
5. Movement after meals: even a 10-minute walk stimulates gut motility and reduces bloating.

GO DEEPER IN THE MENOPAUSE GUT: Chapters on gut motility, the estrobolome, and how declining estrogen changes digestion and fat storage patterns.



TYPE 2

THE REACTIVE GUT

"My body reacts to everything. Foods that used to be fine now cause problems."



You've started reacting to foods that never bothered you before. Dairy, gluten, certain vegetables, even coffee. Your digestion is unpredictable. Some days are fine. Other days, one meal sends everything sideways. You've started avoiding more and more foods, and your diet is getting smaller. You might have been told you have IBS, or that it's "just stress."

SOUND FAMILIAR?

- New food sensitivities that developed in your 40s or 50s
- Alternating between diarrhea and constipation
- Stomach cramps, gas, or urgency after eating
- Skin reactions: eczema flares, rashes, or acne
- Joint pain or stiffness with no clear cause
- Feeling better when you eliminate foods but worse when you reintroduce them
- A growing list of "foods I can't eat anymore"

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Your gut lining may be more permeable than it should be. In midlife, the combination of lower estrogen (which supported gut barrier integrity), higher cortisol (which damages the gut lining), and shifting microbiome populations can create increased intestinal permeability. When the gut lining is compromised, partially digested food particles can trigger immune responses.

That's why foods that were fine for decades suddenly cause reactions. It's not the food that changed. It's your gut.

WHAT TO PRIORITIZE FIRST

1. Focus on gut-soothing foods first: bone broth, cooked vegetables (easier to digest than raw), omega-3 rich fish, and ginger.
2. Remove the top inflammatory triggers for 4 -6 weeks (not permanently): processed foods, added sugar, alcohol, and industrial seed oils. Then reintroduce one at a time.
3. Add L-glutamine rich foods (bone broth, cabbage, beets) which support gut lining repair.
4. Stress management is critical for your type. Cortisol directly damages gut barrier function. Prioritize 5 minutes of daily nervous system regulation.
5. Don't keep shrinking your diet. The goal is to heal the gut so you can eat broadly again, not to avoid everything forever.

GO DEEPER IN THE MENOPAUSE GUT: Chapters on intestinal permeability, the gut-immune connection, food sensitivity vs. allergy, and gut lining repair protocols.



TYPE 3

THE ANXIOUS GUT

"My brain won't stop. My sleep is broken. I feel wired but exhausted."



You might not think of this as a gut issue. But the anxiety that showed up in midlife, the racing thoughts at 3 AM, the sense of dread that has no obvious source, the brain fog that makes you forget words mid-sentence? A significant portion of that is originating in your gut. You feel wired and tired at the same time. Sleep is broken. Your mood swings feel disproportionate to what's happening in your life. And you're starting to wonder if this is just who you are now.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

- New or worsening anxiety, especially at night
- Waking between 2-4 AM with racing thoughts
- Brain fog, difficulty concentrating, forgetting words
- Mood swings that feel out of proportion
- Feeling "on edge" or overstimulated by things that didn't bother you before
- Digestive discomfort that worsens with stress
- Heart palpitations or chest tightness (after ruling out cardiac causes)

WHAT'S HAPPENING

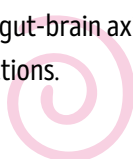
Your gut produces approximately 90-95% of your body's serotonin and about 50% of your dopamine¹. When gut bacteria shift in midlife, neurotransmitter production shifts with them. At the same time, declining progesterone (which is a natural calming agent that supports GABA, your brain's main "calm down" signal) removes a layer of neurological buffering you've had your whole life.

The gut-brain axis, the communication highway between your digestive system and your central nervous system, is sending different signals than it used to. The anxiety isn't "in your head." It's in your gut.

WHAT TO PRIORITIZE FIRST

1. Prioritize foods that support serotonin and GABA production: turkey, salmon, eggs, dark leafy greens, pumpkin seeds, and fermented foods.
2. Magnesium glycinate before bed (supports both gut function and nervous system calming). Discuss dosage with your healthcare provider.
3. Stop eating 3 hours before bed. Late-night eating disrupts the gut-brain signals that regulate sleep cycles.
4. Morning sunlight within 30 minutes of waking (regulates circadian rhythm, which regulates gut motility and neurotransmitter production).
5. Limit caffeine to before noon. Your nervous system is already overstimulated. Caffeine after noon keeps cortisol elevated into the evening.

GO DEEPER IN THE MENOPAUSE GUT: Chapters on the gut-brain axis, neurotransmitter production in the microbiome, the progesterone-GABA connection, and sleep-gut interactions.



TYPE 4

THE DEPLETED GUT

"I'm running on empty. No matter how much I rest, I can't recover."



You're exhausted in a way that sleep doesn't fix. Your hair is thinning. Your nails are brittle. You get sick more often than you used to. You might be eating well on paper, but your body isn't absorbing what it needs. This is the gut type that often gets missed because the symptoms look like "just getting older." They're not.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

- Deep, persistent fatigue that doesn't improve with rest
- Thinning hair, brittle nails, dry skin
- Getting sick frequently or taking longer to recover
- Underactive thyroid, low iron, vitamin D, or B12 on bloodwork (despite supplementing)
- Muscle weakness or slow recovery from exercise
- Feeling like your body is "breaking down"

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Your gut's ability to absorb nutrients has been compromised. In midlife, it's common to lose "digestive fire": less HCL to break down protein, fewer enzymes, and less efficient bile to emulsify fats. Shifts in gut bacteria also reduce production of vitamins like B12 and K that your microbiome used to make on its own. If gut inflammation is present, even low-grade, your intestinal lining's absorptive surface is impaired.

Chronic stress compounds the problem. Elevated cortisol damages the gut lining, accelerates muscle breakdown, weakens immunity, and contributes to poor bone health. You can eat all the right things and still be depleted because your gut isn't processing them properly.

WHAT TO PRIORITIZE FIRST

1. Focus on nutrient-dense, easy-to-absorb foods: slow-cooked meats, bone broth, egg yolks, organ meats (or desiccated supplements), and cooked vegetables over raw.
2. Add digestive support before meals: bitter foods like arugula, dandelion greens, or apple cider vinegar in water to stimulate stomach acid.
3. Prioritize protein at every meal (30-40g minimum). Your body needs amino acids to rebuild and you're likely not absorbing enough.
4. Get bloodwork done: ferritin, vitamin D, B12, magnesium, and a full thyroid panel. Know your baseline.
5. Rest is not optional. Your body is in repair mode. Intense exercise may be making things worse. Walk. Do gentle yoga. Recover.

GO DEEPER IN THE MENOPAUSE GUT: Chapters on nutrient absorption, stomach acid and enzyme production in midlife, the microbiome's role in vitamin synthesis, and building a gut-repair protocol. Start with gut basics in Chapter 1.



WHAT'S NEXT

Your Gut Type Is Your Starting Point

Now that you know your type, you have something most women in midlife don't: a framework for understanding why your body is doing what it's doing. This isn't random. It's a pattern. And patterns can be changed.

Start with the priorities for your primary type. Focus on one change at a time. Most women notice a shift within the first 1-2 weeks of addressing their gut type.

And if you want the complete picture, including the science, the protocols, and the step-by-step approach to rebuilding your gut health in midlife, that's what *The Menopause Gut* is for.

THE MENOPAUSE GUT

The complete guide to the gut-hormone connection in midlife.

By Cynthia Thurlow | Penguin Random House | April 28, 2026

Pre-order now and receive over \$300 in exclusive bonuses including access to the RESTART program, video masterclasses, and more.

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cynthiathurlow.com/themenopausegut

WANT STRUCTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY?

RESTART is Cynthia's 6-week nutrition program for women in midlife. It's designed around the same principles you learned in this guide, with a cohort of women doing it alongside you. Enrollment opens 4 times per year.

[JOIN THE RESTART WAITLIST]

KEEP LEARNING

The Everyday Wellness Podcast covers gut health, hormones, nutrition, and midlife health every week. Subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts.

Source

1. Yano et al., *Cell*, 2015; Eisenhofer et al., *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, 1997