

# Menopause and its effect

The phrase “change of life” used to be whispered behind gloved hands, strictly in the company of ladies of a certain age. Thankfully, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have become more open about the various phases of life, and menopause is one that is going to happen to every woman.

Being more open about this stage of life and its effects normalises your experience of it. Women also need to talk to and educate their partners about the physiological and emotional changes they are going through.

Menopause often occurs in the middle of other life changes such as children leaving home, becoming a grandmother, caring for elderly parents and reaching career pinnacles. It's a time when women often reassess who they are, and this can affect their relationships. Creating opportunities to talk to your partner and being open about your experience helps in bringing them along for the ride.

A man's attitude to menopause also has a bearing on how well a woman copes. Commenting that she's menopausal and “turning into a dragon” is no way to express loving concern.

The changes produced by menopause may affect your ability to enjoy sex the way you used to. Physically, women don't lubricate as much when they are menopausal, so sex may be more painful. The spontaneity of sex often diminishes. A little more preparation may be needed to ensure a mutually enjoyable experience.

Sometimes women may ask to sleep by themselves for a while if night sweats and hot flushes are making sleep impossible.

A partner who can understand this and not feel threatened will help his relationship survive one of the rocky bits that most good relationships go through from time to time. If men want to help the relationship through this phase, understanding and supporting their partners is the way to go. A little support can go a long way – it might be as simple as thinking before you speak.

The good news is that menopause is a phase, not a life sentence. Once it passes most women feel fantastic. Their sex drive returns and they are comfortable about their bodies and who they are.

And that's worth looking forward to – for both men and women.

## Survival tips

- **Menopause is a normal phase and shouldn't be hidden away – it needs to be talked about**
- **Women must talk to their intimate partners about possible effects on their sex life and negotiate changes**
- **Women need and value men who can support them through this phase.**