

## Helping Men Understand the Perimenopause and Menopause

Many men struggle to understand what the perimenopause and menopause are and how it can affect women. If you are reading this article you have taken a big step in trying to support a woman who may be experiencing this, so, thank you.

Although it's important to remember it's a natural process in a woman's life, it can be fraught with all sorts of symptoms both physiological and psychological and most women will experience many different symptoms at different times during their transition.

Today there are over 35 different symptoms recorded as being associated with the perimenopause and menopause, the most common ones include:

- period changes
- hot flashes
- night sweats
- memory problems
- anxiety
- mood changes
- sleep problems
- exhaustion
- lack of libido

These symptoms can start in a woman's early to mid 40s but some ladies unfortunately suffer this much earlier.

The good news is that there are some simple things that women and doctors can do to help them feel better but also support from an understanding and caring partner makes all the difference to many women.

### So what can you do

1. Educate yourself as to what the symptoms are and why they might be happening. There are some other information leaflets on this website that may help that.
2. Talk to your partner about how she is feeling and ask her how best you can help her during this time.
3. If she hasn't already sought help from a healthcare professional who specialises in the menopause, encourage her to do so. For many women that this can be really helpful as they can talk about how they're feeling, what they are experiencing, and the menopause specialist can advise on the best form of treatments to help manage her individual symptoms.
4. If she is emotional or snappy try not to react but understand that these hormonal changes can mean that women can experience real periods of low mood and irritability and this is often compounded by physical symptoms and tiredness.
5. Women may experience physical changes such as weight gain and hair and skin changes which can really affect a woman's self-confidence and self-esteem. Try and support her with reminding her why you love her and how much.
6. Be patient if she forgets things or struggles to concentrate like she used to. A lack of oestrogen in the brain can cause memory problems for lots of ladies and they worry that they might be getting dementia. If need be encourage her to put things in her calendar, make lists and reassure her that dementia is rare in young women.

7. If she wants to change the plans last minute or can't face having people around for example, understand this could be because her symptoms are really severe that day, stay flexible and embrace spontaneity!

8. For many women sex can be painful and not as fulfilling as it used to be so women can lose her libido and not want to be intimate with their partner which can cause immense sadness for lots of women. Don't see this as a personal insult but try and be patient and understanding.

9. For many women this can be a period of great sadness as they see this as an ageing process and about losing their fertility for example. Talk about this, and acknowledge these thoughts.

10. Following a healthy lifestyle and diet is really important so join her in taking up more exercise, drinking less, stopping smoking and addressing dietary changes if needed. Work as a team!

11. Help her out more at home if needed, she may not have the energy to keep the house as tidy as before or the motivation to cook a large meal for the family, dust off your cookbooks and get the kids involved too, if you can.

Finally, relationships can come under severe strain at this time in a women's life and divorce rates are sadly higher than at any other time in a woman's life. If you are both really struggling as a couple seek help from agencies such as relate. Remember understanding and communication are they key for all couples, especially at this time in a woman's life.

The fact that you are reading this and want to help and support her will make a big difference.

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