

## Societal Expectations

You may not realise it but there are so many implicit and explicit expectations put on women by society to look, act and be a certain way, especially with the western cultures.

For the most part, seductive potential is seen to be part of a female's identity, which is often also attached to youth and sexual attraction. Due to these factors there is a lot of negativity surrounding changes during the menopause where women view it as a decrease in femininity as hormone balances change and you lose your fertility.

This however is very much culture dependent! Within some cultures it is seen as a symbol of success however often within the western society it is viewed as a sign of ageing. This often leads to many jumping to medications and other radical treatments in order to combat the signs of ageing. It would be much healthier to make lifestyle changes as these are more likely to avoid complications, however these are not instant and often are not as effective.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to feel beautiful however society has created some ridiculous beauty standards where it is almost impossible to achieve "the look" no matter what age. Body image has become a hot topic where health has often come second to achieving what is deemed desirable. This is incredibly damaging especially as the menopause hits and your body goes through such dramatic changes.

The menopause is just a new phase of life containing many anatomical, hormonal, physical and psychological changes. Some women feel relief from pain and menstrual cycle management however most women have negative attitudes towards the transition feel they lose their femininity.

The most common areas that are impacted are: weight gain, loss of libido, mood swings, hot flashes and vaginal dryness. These are physical issues but they heighten stress a lot of the time making the situation worse. If women are predisposed to low self esteem they often have increased menopausal complaints.

Women struggle to find support from doctors, society, family and within the workplace, which again causes even more stress. There is huge expectation that women will put up and shut up due to lack of knowledge about the menopause. That should not be the case your feelings are valid and should be treated as such. Do your own research too but you know your body so if you know something is wrong so make sure you get the help and support you need!!