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Sex for Women After 50

What is sex like for women over 50?

It's a question many women have, especially as they approach menopause. This "change of life" is driven by declines in the hormone estrogen. The ovaries stop releasing eggs and menstruation ceases.

In North America, the average age for menopause is 51, so it's fitting that we start our discussion here. But this is just an average. Some women go through menopause later. Some experience it in their thirties or forties. And some may go through surgical menopause if they have had their ovaries removed.

Generally speaking, a woman is considered to be finished with menopause when she has not had a menstrual period for twelve months. Before that, she is said to be in perimenopause, when estrogen levels tend to fluctuate. Her periods may become erratic. They might be heavy one month and light the next. She might feel fatigued, get headaches, have hot flashes, and become moody. And during this time, she can still become pregnant.

Her sex life can change, too. Estrogen is important for sexual health. It keeps vaginal tissues healthy and plays a role in sex drive.

But drops in estrogen levels don't signal the end of a woman's sex life. Not at all. In fact, some women say sex is better after menopause, especially when pregnancy is no longer a concern. (However, postmenopausal women can still acquire sexually-transmitted infections – and many do. Safe sex practices are just as important after menopause as before.)

Let's take a quick look at some of the sexual issues often faced by women after 50:

- **Painful intercourse.** When you were younger, you probably had few problems with vaginal lubrication when you became sexually excited. Unfortunately, this changes for many women as they get older. Declines in estrogen mean the vagina is less moist. It's also less flexible. As a result, sex can become painful. Friction from penetration can irritate the dry vaginal tissue.

Many women find that a personal lubricant is helpful. Lubricants can be purchased over the counter at the drugstore and come in many varieties.

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(Be sure to choose a water-based lubricant if you are using condoms.) Moisturizers are also available. You might also consider hormone replacement therapy, if your doctor thinks it is safe for you.

A medication called [Osphena](#) is another possibility. This drug acts like estrogen and helps keep the vagina moist and flexible.

- **Low sex drive.** When estrogen levels fall, so can a woman's sex drive. However, menopause is not the only culprit. Many women over 50 have a lot on their plates. They may be working full time, raising children, preparing adolescents for adulthood, and caring for aging parents. Sometimes, the stress and anxiety of daily life makes a woman so exhausted that she's not interested in sex.

If you lose some sexual spark, talk to your doctor. He or she can help pinpoint the problem. Hormone replacement therapy might be appropriate.

If you're feeling stressed, see what you can do to relax. Talk to a friend, ask for help from family, or talk to a counselor. Have a night out with the girls or try a new exercise class at the gym.

Be sure to keep your partner in the loop, too. Chances are, he or she has noticed the changes in your relationship. Talk over your difficulties and try to make time for just the two of you. Keeping lines of communication open may make you stronger as a couple. A counselor or sex therapist may help, too.

- **Needing more time.** You might notice that takes you longer to become fully aroused or to reach orgasm. This is quite common. Try not to worry too much about it. If you need more foreplay, explain that to your partner. Then relax and enjoy the experience.

Sometimes, changing the routine is all that's needed. You might consider other sexual positions, have sex in other locations, share fantasies, or try out some sex toys. (Remember, too, that your partner might need more time as well. For example, men might need more stimulation to get a firm erection. You can find more information about sexual changes for men over 50 [here](#).)

It's important to note that while menopause is often a big contributing factor to sexual issues at this age, it is not the only factor. Health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and depression can also cause sexual difficulties. If you are having a sexual problem, be sure to discuss it with your gynecologist. The solution may be something simple, like a lubricant or experimenting with a new sexual position. Or, it may be more complicated and require medication or lifestyle changes.

The following links can help you learn more about sex and aging for women:

[Back Pain Isn't the End of Sexual Satisfaction](#)

[Dealing with Arthritis](#)

[Osphena Approved to Treat Painful Sex](#)

[Sex Health and Aging for Women](#)

[Sexual Satisfaction and Aging](#)

[STD Tests for the Elderly](#)

[STDs and Safe Sex](#)

[Vulvar and Vaginal Atrophy](#)

Resources

The North American Menopause Society

“Sexual Health & Menopause Online”

(Complete series. 2014)

<http://www.menopause.org/for-women/sexual-health-menopause-online>

The Menopause Book

Wingert, Pat and Barbara Kantrowitz

“Chapter 5 – Sex”

(Workman Publishing. 2009. Pages 97 – 137)

<http://www.workman.com/products/9780761155980/>

WomensHealth.gov (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

“Menopause and sexuality”

(Last updated: September 22, 2010)

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/menopause/menopause-sexuality/index.html#pubs>