

PILLOW TALK

Your most personal (and provocative!) questions, answered

Q *Since menopause, sex has become painful. What can I do?*

Susi Lennox, co-founder of YES – the organic intimacy company (yesyesyes.com), says:

Painful sex is quite possibly the most distressing and least acknowledged symptom of the menopause.

Unfortunately, many women do not discuss this sensitive issue with their doctors or even realise that there are remedies available. In actual fact, there are many things that you can do to ease discomfort during intercourse.

Menopause is characterised by the lowering of oestrogen levels, and dyspareunia (or painful sex) is caused by the inadequate lubrication that results

at the hands of this hormonal change.

To get rid of sexual discomfort a woman can try to rebalance hormones through careful supplementation, restoring the body's ability to produce enough natural lubricant on its own, or simply replace the diminishing lubrication with a natural intimacy product.

Not all such products are the same, however. Your intimate tissues will have become more sensitive with menopause and more susceptible to irritation from concerning ingredients. So choose a trusted natural lubricant or moisturiser which is responsibly formulated by a respected brand. Ensure it is pH and osmolality matched to the vagina and that it's certified organic as this is your guarantee of its plant-based purity!

Q *My partner no longer wants to have sex very often. Does he find me unattractive?*

Sami Wunder, dating and relationship coach and author of *Your Feminine Roadmap To His Commitment* ([samiwundercoaching](http://samiwundercoaching.com)), says:

In my experience, this problem is hardly ever anything to do with the woman's attractiveness. Your partner could be under work stress, physically tired or struggling with depression. Relationship issues can deplete a man's libido and so can unresolved anger, disrespect and blame. I would recommend thinking outside of you. Usually a dip like this is temporary and fixable.

Try getting away one weekend to spend some quality time together. This will help you reconnect while reducing stress. If he's not open to this, talk to him about how this makes you feel. Sex is a sensitive topic for men, so be sure not to lay blame. If he opens up, listen without trying to fix him. Once you can offer a safe space for him to be vulnerable, you'll be able to decide together if further counselling is needed.

Q *I'd like to try online dating, but I'm worried that I won't be able to connect with someone in this way. Any tips?*

James Preece, dating coach and relationship expert (jamesprece.com), says:

The secret to connecting with someone online is positivity. Smile a genuine smile in your photo and look at the camera as if you are making eye contact with them. You should also try to use happy, positive words in your profile description. Write about the things you love doing and demonstrate a real passion for them, avoiding anything too generic. If you sound and look like someone having a wonderful life, people will naturally be drawn to you and want to be a part of it, too! Lastly, if you see someone you like, don't be shy. Initiate a conversation by talking directly to them through messaging or commenting features.

Q *We hardly ever have sex and when we do it's usually quick and devoid of emotion. How can we reclaim our spark?*

Hilda Burke, a London-based psychotherapist, life coach and couples counsellor (hildaburke.co.uk), says:

When couples have reached this stage, invariably their communication has broken down and that's why sex feels unconnected. The first step is to start becoming receptive to each other again as sex without receptivity is bad sex! If I were working with such a couple, I'd be curious to look at what point the intimacy started becoming cursory. Sex going awry is symptomatic of a breakdown in understanding between the partners, so the first step in improving that will be each person taking responsibility for their role in leading the relationship and sex life to where it currently is.