

## Sex Problems in Menopausal Women

**How does sex change as you get older?** Sex can still be very satisfying as you age, but it can also change in several ways. As you get older, you might have:

- Less interest in sex.
- Trouble getting aroused or lubricated.
- Pain or discomfort during sex.
- Trouble reaching orgasm.
- Orgasms that are less intense or satisfying than they used to be.

**What causes sex to change as you get older?** There are many things that can lead to decreased interest or ability to have sex as you age. These include:

- Lower hormones. As you age, your body makes less sex hormones. In women, the drop in hormones is more sudden, especially if they have had their ovaries removed.
- Other medical conditions. Diabetes, heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure and chronic pain can decrease a person's interest in or ability to have sex.
- Past surgery or medical treatment. Women who had surgery to treat problems with their bladder or sex organs or treatment for cancer can also have problems with sex.
- Depression or anxiety. As people get older, they sometimes have problems with depression or anxiety.
- Medicines. Some of the medicines older people take to control diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, depression and other conditions can have side effects that cause problems with sex.
- Relationship problems. Sometimes partners have different ideas about sex and this can lead to problems.
- Pain during sex. This can happen because the vagina can become dry and the tissue can thin after menopause.

If you are not satisfied with your sex life, seek out medical attention. There may be treatments or solutions your provider suggests.

**Is there anything I can do on my own to improve my sex life?** Communicating with your partner and explaining your feelings and concerns about sex and your relationship is a good starting point. Try to find ways to work around any problems you or your partner have. Do not continue to have sex if it is painful. Also, encourage your partner to seek treatment for any physical or sexual problems they might have. If you have a condition that causes pain or stiffness, such as arthritis, try to schedule sex at a time when you are at your best and your pain medicines are most effective. If you are less flexible than you used to be, try different positions, or ask your partner if they can help.

**What if I had a heart attack or other major health crisis?** If you had a heart attack or other health crisis, the idea of having sex might scare you. Many people can have sex safely afterward. Check with your provider. You will need to wait after your health crisis is over before you have sex. You might need to change what you do during sex.

**How can my provider help me?** When you seek medical help, bring all the medicines you take, including non-prescription and herbal medicines. Also, be honest with what's going on, so your provider is better able to help you. Talking about sex and relationships may feel awkward. Your provider wants to help you.

Your provider might:

- Suggest changing your medicines or doses that are likely to cause problems.
- Suggest hormones or medicines.
- Suggest lubricants or devices.
- Recommend that you speak to a counselor or therapist, either by yourself or with your partner.