

# Increased Sex Drive in Perimenopause? You're Not Alone.

Perimenopause, or the period of time leading up to menopause, is a transitional period for many women. Hormones begin to fluctuate, which commonly causes the onset of symptoms such as hot flashes, mood swings and menstrual irregularities.

Another symptom that's common — but not as commonly discussed — is a change in libido or sex drive. While some women struggle with a [decline in their sex drive](#) during perimenopause and menopause, others may actually notice an *increase* in their desire for sex. Understanding the connection between perimenopause and increased libido, as well as what is going on to cause this shift, may help you embrace your growing appetite for sexual intimacy.

## Why Might Your Sex Drive Change During Perimenopause?

While many perimenopause symptoms are associated with fluctuating hormones, that's not necessarily the case with changes in libido, according to OBGYN, [Dr. Suzanne Hall](#). "Most of the libido is surprisingly not directly related to our hormonal state," Dr. Hall says. "As we enter into perimenopause and menopause, what affects our libido the most dramatically are psychosocial factors."<sup>1</sup>

Shifting attitudes around self-esteem and relationships, potentially less work- and parenting-related stress, and more time to pursue what makes them happy are just a few of the factors that may give women the freedom to appreciate intimacy in new ways, Dr. Hall explains.

Changes that can have a psychosocial impact on a woman's life — and her libido — during perimenopause include:

### Fewer Caretaking Responsibilities

The age at which many women approach perimenopause may coincide with a time when their children are getting older, and therefore require less care. "As our kids get older, our level of fatigue and stress from child-rearing and family-raising may begin to lessen," Dr. Hall says. "This allows for more time to address partnerships, intimate relationships and sexual time."

This rekindling of intimacy between partners may reach its peak after kids leave "the nest" for college or other adventures; research even shows marital satisfaction improves when children move away from home.<sup>2</sup> If a woman happens to be in perimenopause or menopause as her nest empties, she may find her libido responding positively to this change.

An increased libido doesn't just happen for married women during perimenopause, either. According to Dr. Hall, women starting new relationships, perhaps due to divorce or loss of a partner, can also experience a surge in their sex drive. "Research shows<sup>3</sup> improved sexual functioning and increased libido in new relationships," she says.

## **Improved Self Esteem**

"Body image is a big factor in how our libido functions," says Dr. Hall. When we feel good about ourselves, we may feel more comfortable in the bedroom — and many women find themselves feeling more confident about their bodies as they age.

A massive 2018 analysis of 191 research articles about self-esteem that included data from almost 165,000 people found self-esteem increases gradually throughout middle age before peaking at age 60.<sup>4</sup> A more recent study published in the journal *Body Image*, confirmed this research for women in particular, finding that their self-esteem increased with age and was highest at 60 years old.<sup>5</sup>

For women who are in perimenopause or menopause, Dr. Hall explains, newfound body confidence could lead to fewer inhibitions (and greater desire) when it comes to sex.

## **Less Stress at Work**

Just as fewer family responsibilities may allow a perimenopausal woman to strengthen intimate connections, so might less stress at work. While it's certainly not true for everyone, Dr. Hall suggests that perimenopause may happen during the time in a woman's life when her career is peaking. A stable, not-overly-taxing position at work may allow more time and energy (both physical and mental) to devote to intimacy.

This suggestion makes sense given the toll work stress can take on sexual desire. A 2019 study found 51% of respondents reported they weren't having sex with their partners because their jobs caused them so much stress.<sup>6</sup>

## **Is Increased Libido in Perimenopause Ever a Problem?**

There's no such thing as "normal" when it comes to sex drive, meaning an increased libido during perimenopause is only a problem if it's a problem for you (or your partner). Although she doesn't encounter many patients who complain about an increased libido, Dr. Hall says that if libido is affecting your quality of life — if it's causing problems in your relationship, or if you're putting yourself in unsafe situations — you should talk to your healthcare provider who may be able to refer you to a sex therapist who specializes in this area.<sup>7</sup>

It's also important to remember that you can still get pregnant during perimenopause, so be sure to continue using contraception until you've gone through menopause (12 months without a period).<sup>8</sup>

Resources:

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21143419/>
2. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02222.x>
3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/slightly-blighty/201508/why-new-partner-boosts-your-sex-life>
4. <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2018-33338-001.html>
5. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1740144521000966>
6. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6563889/stress-libido-sex-drive/#:~:text=Stress%20can%20increase%20the%20production,bedrooms%E2%80%9D%20because%20of%20work%20stress>
7. <https://www.healthline.com/health/high-libido#possible-causes>
8. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23932427/>