

FOR THE MEN IN OUR LIVES

We all have women in our lives: mothers, sisters, grandmothers, aunts, nieces, girlfriends, wives, daughters, female friends, female co-workers, female acquaintances, etc. Showing compassion and understanding goes a long way, even for things you don't fully understand or go through yourself. The weight of being able to bear children comes with some challenging aspects of female life that women are expected to breeze through, even though menstruation, childbirth, and menopause are anything but a cakewalk.

Unfortunately, most men are taught to only concern themselves with their own anatomy. Female anatomy and "issues" of menstruation, childbirth, and menopause are "girl's stuff" they shouldn't bother themselves with. That approach is far from helpful. It's amazing that many men are confused by how a woman can pee with a tampon in. Instagram sensation Dr. Karen Tang, OB/GYN, often gets the "how many holes" question quite often. Being a compassionate, educated, and understanding person is part and parcel of being a kind human in any relationship with a woman. You expect others to be sensitive to your needs. Showing that same sensitivity to others makes you a better person. Women's health and anatomy is not dirty or taboo. Buying tampons or menstrual products for the women in your life should be embraced as being supportive and loving, not embarrassing or emasculating. The important takeaway here is to be compassionate, understanding, and empathetic towards something you may not fully understand or experience yourself.

* Medical data has shown that some women can experience period pain equal to that of a heart attack. Now, before you dismiss this as "fake news" or "it can't be all *that* bad," why would you assume something is untrue just because you never have, nor will never experience it? If a man told you that he experienced a heart attack, and it was the worst pain of his life, chances are you'd believe him. Women don't get that luxury. However, in this case, you can apply the "not all women" phrase because that is true; not all women will experience period pain that equals the pain of a heart attack. But some women most certainly do! I was one of those women. Experiencing this level of pain as a 13-year-old girl. Remember to be kind; everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.

The menopause transition is unique to each woman, similar to how a woman experiences her menstrual cycle. The menstruation and menopause symptoms women experience are as unique as a fingerprint. While some symptoms overlap from woman to woman, it is not a one-size-fits-all experience.

For a more comprehensive understanding and clinical insight, I suggest three books by Dr. Jen Gunter, OB/GYN. These three books are highly recommended for men and women. Each

serves as an instruction manual for menopause, female anatomy, and menstruation. These books cover everything high school health classes didn't, particularly on the female body.

- *The Menopause Manifesto*
- *The Vagina Bible*
- *Blood*

Stats

Women make up roughly half the population.

If they live long enough, all women will go through the menopause transition.

Most women will spend 40% of their lives in the menopause transition.

Men don't go through a menopause equivalent. Yes, they experience a drop in testosterone, but it is much slower and happens much later in life. And they never lose their ability to sire children.

Learn Basic Female Anatomy

At the very least, learn basic female anatomy. Refer to the book mentioned above, *The Vagina Bible*. Or seek out medical-grade learning material. If you are having sex, you should know your own, as well as your partner's anatomy. It would also be beneficial to educate yourself on the phases of the menstruation cycle, pregnancy, if applicable, and menopause. You may feel these things do not apply to you, but if there are women in your life, they would greatly appreciate your understanding and compassion surrounding these events in their lives.

It is simply ridiculous that many of the male politicians making laws based on the female body don't have the first clue about how it works or its anatomy. Least of all, that women have any control over something like a miscarriage, which is an extremely difficult thing to experience and should be treated with sensitivity and compassion. NO ONE has the right to make the decision of what someone else can or cannot do with their body. End of story.

WHAT IS The Menopause Transition?

Perimenopause – most women will experience perimenopause around their mid-40s. It can last anywhere from 5 to 7 years. This marks the beginning of menopause with fluctuations in two primary hormones, estrogen and progesterone. During this time, women will experience an endless menu of symptoms.

Menopause & Postmenopause _ The average age of menopause is 50 or 51. Menopause, itself is one day, after 365 days or a year has passed without a menstrual cycle. That one day is menopause; everything after until the end of life is post-menopause.

What Happens During the Menopause Transition?

A great deal is going on in a woman's body during the menopause transition. But in simple terms, two important hormones, estrogen and progesterone, are fluctuating and slowly declining, which will mark the end of fertility.

(Some, But Not All) Common Symptoms

- Menstrual Cycle Disruptions
- Mood Swings
- Depression
- Brain fog
- Fatigue and Lack of Energy
- Trouble Sleeping
- Weight Gain
- Hot Flushes
- Pelvic Health Concerns
- Digestive Issues
- Sexual Health Concerns
- Skin Dryness, Breakouts
- Thinning hair
- Joint & Muscle pain
- Loss of Bone Density leading to potential osteoporosis
- Loss of Muscle Mass
- Incontinence
- Oral issues include Xerostomia (dry mouth), Periodontal Disease, and Dysgeusia (altered taste).
- Impaired Vision

Throughout the Body

There isn't a system in the body that isn't affected by menopause. It is a body-wide transition and extends far beyond the cardinal feature hot-flushes (which 85 % of women experience).

Endocrine system

Central nervous system

Digestive system

Urogenital system

Skeletal and muscular systems

Excretory system

Reproductive system

Immune system

Mucous membranes

Cardiovascular system

Respiratory system

Hormones, estrogen, and progesterone do a great deal for women's bodies, much of which we do not fully understand yet. These two hormones protect women before menopause against some cancers and chronic illnesses. They keep muscle mass and bone density at stable levels. After menopause, when these hormones have dropped significantly, women's risk for cardiovascular disease, in particular, skyrockets (it's also the number one killer of women in the US). There is also loss of muscle mass and bone density, leading to osteoporosis. Weight training, weight-bearing exercises, and consuming enough protein can help maintain muscle mass and bone density, keeping osteoporosis at bay.

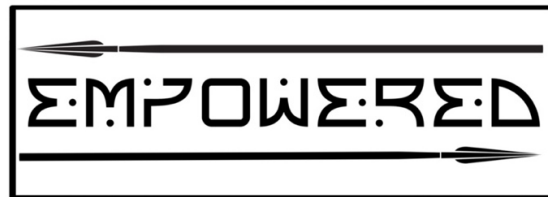
How You Can Help

If you experience a woman in your life who appears to be "off her game," approach her with kindness and compassion. Avoid rolling your eyes in the assumption that it's her "time of the month," or she's an older woman, so she must be in menopause. Those responses are misogynistic, outdated, and unkind. Perhaps go out of your way to make her a cup of mint tea, no matter who she is in your life. Even a female coworker will see it as an act of kindness and will most likely help you in the future.

The bottom line is to be understanding and compassionate. The age-old response that women should "deal with it," insinuating they should endure the pain they are in, is ignorant and highly insensitive. If you were expected to endure the pain of a heart attack every month for the better part of your life, you might grow a bit cranky about it. And yet, that's what society, schools, jobs, and women's families expect. Keep on, keeping on, no matter what.

Also, don't take her fluctuating attitude or mood personally. Yo-yoing hormones can wreak havoc on a woman's mood, personality, temperament, and patience. Give her space. Lead with compassion. There is help; there are tools for her. As I keep repeating, compassion and understanding will go a long way. Being sensitive and listening are also key.

* Source: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/period-pain-is-officially-as-bad-as-a-heart-attack-so-why-have-doctors-ignored-it-the-answer-is-simple-a6883831.html>



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