

When I got my period at age 11, my mother was caught completely off guard. To have the talk with me at such a young age was not something she had prepared herself for. She comforted me by telling me an anecdote:

A young girl walks into a pharmacy. With a huge smile across her face, she asks the clerk, "Can I have a box of sanitary napkins?" She's practically giddy to be inducted into womanhood.

A 20-something woman walks into the same pharmacy and asks the same clerk, "Can I have a box of sanitary napkins?" Breathing a sigh of relief, she adds a "Thank god!"

A 30-something woman who'd been trying to get pregnant walks into the pharmacy with an expression that has sadness and exhaustion written all over it: "Can I have a box of sanitary napkins?"

*A 50-something woman walks into the pharmacy and asks the clerk, "Seriously? Can I have a f***ing box of sanitary napkins?"*

This was my formal introduction to being a woman. I was completely baffled by her story, but looking back, it all seemed so normal coming from a woman who referred to her period with euphemisms like "that time of the month," "Aunt Flo" and "Crimson Tide." Why such a code was needed for something that happens every month to half the population mystified me.

While my mother barely spoke about her period, I don't recall her ever talking about going into menopause. I just know that one day when I was about 16, she stopped asking me to include pads or tampons for her when I went shopping for mine. For all I knew, menopause simply meant no more periods. Having spent the last five years with my own period, this menopause thing already seemed like a great idea.

Menopause: The Gift that Keeps on Giving

I had a hysterectomy to remove fibroids when I was 34, and was 42 when I started menopause. From day one it was a horror show. Along with hot flashes and night sweats, I started gaining weight, having migraines more frequently, and my breasts and reproductive area were in constant pain. I suddenly had problems falling and staying asleep, and heartburn was on my body's daily to-do list.

My mother died when I was 27, so asking her what she experienced was impossible. Instead, I asked my two sisters-in-law. Neither of their experiences came close to mirroring each other. One told me she had her period one month and the next month she didn't have it. She couldn't recall a single hot flash or typical symptom, just the cessation of her periods. The other is still having symptoms 13 years in.

Despite how much this was beginning to suck, I lived in fear of an [increased risk of cancer](#) with hormone replacement therapy (HRT), so I opted to go the natural route to treat my symptoms. I discovered [Evening Primrose](#) to minimize the hot flashes, breast and reproductive pain and

yogurt for the heartburn, but figured I was stuck with insomnia. There was something else though. Something I had no way of comfortably talking about, let alone addressing.

My sex drive dropped. Daily sex with my husband turned into weekly, which eventually turned into biweekly. By the time I worked up the nerve to ask women I knew were in menopause how they were dealing with lowered libido, I was 47. It turns out I was no different from my mother after all.

Cannabis for Low Libido: Anecdotally, a Solution For Women in Menopause

Although it is estimated [85 percent of women experience menopausal symptoms](#), why do we have such a hard time talking about something so natural? Is it the perceived loss of femininity we fear? Does it tap into our deep-seeded concerns about aging and not feeling as useful or important to our partners?

And if we saw ourselves as sexual beings previously, if we're no longer owning our sexuality the way we used to, do we need to redefine who we are, fight the process or give in and accept who we've become? A million and one questions swirled in my brain nearly every waking moment. I was beginning to feel inadequate, where I once had mountains of self-confidence.

Julia* of California described everything I was feeling:

“When I first went into menopause, I refused to acknowledge it was happening to me. I was really in denial about what it was doing to my sex life, something that had previously been an important and consistent source of pleasure,” she said.

“My brain *wanted* sex, but found that my body wasn't as interested in it. It often felt like my body was turning against me. I wanted to be that person I once was who used to crave sex, but with profound sadness I accepted I was no longer that person. It felt like I was experiencing the five stages of grief.”

While we are led to believe loss of [libido is normal in menopause](#), beyond hormone therapy and/or using natural remedies to deal with the symptoms, it's as if we're on our own finding the solution. Depending on the relationship we have with our doctors, we may or may not feel comfortable asking for help. And in truth, most doctors are far more likely to suggest a remedy created by Big Pharma before suggesting anything natural, like cannabis.



There are many anecdotal reports of women who have successfully quelled symptoms of menopause with cannabis. Others find it helps with their sex drive. Science has been slow to catch up to this trend.

When Madelyn* of Maryland started menopause, she had just turned 50 and was in a rocky marriage. “We’d already stopped having sex, but not because of menopause. We were no longer connecting. It’s difficult to get in the mood when you’re fighting all the time. After I left him, I wondered whether I’d ever have sex again, and if and when I did, would it be pleasurable or painful?”

Then she ran into an old boyfriend at a community pool. “Both recently divorced, we picked up where we’d left off,” she said. But there was anxiety about having sex with him, and she feared she wouldn’t be able to perform.

“He noticed I was nervous and he did as he had done back in the day: he rolled a joint.”

The sex, she said, was as incredible as it had always been. She noticed it wasn’t as pleasurable when they had sex without weed. She discovered that being turned on wasn’t enough.

“While I have no scientific proof, I think the THC does two things: in addition to giving me a head and a body high so I could relax, it also seems to seep into my vagina, which was on fire! I can’t explain it.”

Julia’s experience using cannabis to stimulate her libido is similar to Madelyn’s. “I have my go-to strains that are guaranteed to help get me in the mood, but I have found most strains with lots of THC will do the trick. I’m so grateful to have discovered weed. I am a sexual being again!”

Ta'Mara Mo'Nique Walker of Oregon discovered the solution to decreased libido before she went into menopause 20 years ago.

“When I was in my 40s, I tried cannabis to enhance sex and it was powerful! Now that I’m divorced and dating here and there, whenever I do have sex now, cannabis is a must. I’m not dry down there and sex doesn’t hurt, but my sex drive isn’t as strong as it was when I was younger. Cannabis puts me in the mood and keeps me there.”

There is very little beyond anecdotal evidence to show that cannabis can increase sex drive in menopausal women. [One study from 2019](#) looked at 373 women who used cannabis prior to sex. The majority reported an increase in sex drive and clitoral orgasm, along with decreased pain during intercourse. An earlier study of [21 cannabis consumers](#) used magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to gauge what happens in the brain when exposed to erotic images.

Although the cohort in the MRI study was small, the results told a promising story: the MRIs revealed that “cannabis intoxication increases activation of the right nucleus accumbens to erotic stimuli. This effect may be useful in the treatment of low sexual desire.”

My Own Experience Using Cannabis to Increase Libido

By most standards, I was a little late to the cannabis scene. I grew up in a fairly religious home and when I was 14, my older brother overdosed on cocaine laced with PCP. He lived but he hasn’t been the same since. My parents used his OD as the perfect opportunity to promote the “weed is a gateway drug” narrative, which I believed until I was 48 years old (six years ago).

My doctor and husband convinced me to get my medical card when it became legal in Puerto Rico in 2015. When I was 18, I slipped in a cast iron bathtub and fell on my lower back. With nine degenerative discs and no interest in fusing them together, every doctor I’ve had since the accident has prescribed Vicodin. None have ever doubted that I live with sometimes debilitating pain and because I’ve always taken half the recommended dosage, none have been concerned about me developing an addiction.

My doctor and my husband had a long and uphill battle convincing me that my parents were wrong about the gateway drug claims. I could still hear my mother’s voice reminding me about my brother’s overdose.

Both provided me with studies proving the safety and efficacy of cannabis, for myriad health conditions, including some of the big ones, like [cancer](#). My husband also shared articles with me about the War on Drugs—the campaign dreamed up by the FBI to convince a nation that cannabis and hemp were evil, so they could lock up anyone for using it, particularly Black and Brown people.

Once convinced, I was won over. What I discovered is that I do still have a sex drive, I just need to tap into it in a different way. My husband and I engaged in a little trial and error: sex with cannabis and sex without. There was a clear winner.