

THE INDEPENDENT

Why sex is better in my late forties than when I was in my twenties



After 24 years together we've both learned a lot about sex. Here are some of the problems you can encounter as you get older – and tips on how to get past them

The common myth is by the time you hit your forties, your sex life will be non-existent. I'm happily married with three children, two of whom are teenagers, but I'm having better sex now, at 47, than when I was in my twenties. At the age of 20 I was clueless about sex, men and my body. Now, I'm a mature woman who loves sex and knows what I want.

I get fed up reading negative articles about being perimenopausal (moving closer to menopause), something which I am. I know that many women who do enjoy sex experience a wide range of sexual problems from decreased libido to vaginal dryness - myself included - but there are things you can do to overcome these symptoms.

Running a sex toy website has made me aware of just how many problems people experience when it comes to sex, so I now write health and pleasure articles, offering practical advice and tips about how to enjoy sexual intimacy whoever you are and whatever your age, sexual problem, disability, illness or disease.

It has made me realise just how lucky I am to have such a good sex life, compared to many people. And this got me thinking about what makes sex so much better for me and my husband now we're in our late forties.

Sex for me

I met my husband when I was 23. The first time we had sex I had an amazing orgasm which I actually thanked him for. I had had a couple of boyfriends and a few one night stands, but never had an orgasm either clitorally or vaginally with any of them as they were as inept at sex as me.

Sex wasn't always great, however. I experienced vaginismus, which is the tightening of vagina muscles whenever penetration is attempted. I also had many bouts of thrush, cystitis and urinary tract infections, all of which made me wary about having sex as they seemed to be sex related. I learnt over time that scented products are problematic, and that hormonal changes cause thrush but no one ever offered this advice at the time. We also never used lubricants which would have made sex more pleasurable.

We have sex frequently

By this I meant 3-4 times a week, but not always. It can be hard work motivating yourself at times, especially if you are tired or don't feel in the mood, but I find myself getting ratty with everyone if we have a dry spell. We haven't always had sex this frequently, but by making an effort, I often find that for me, the best sex often happens when I'm not really in the mood. You don't even have to have coital sex, just try foreplay or cuddling and kissing.

Sex is good for us

Having sex makes me feel good. The benefits of having sex are huge, from releasing feel good endorphins, to reducing stress, making you sleep better and giving you glowing skin, in addition to warding off sexual dysfunction problems. A recent study also showed men who ejaculate often are less likely to develop prostate cancer.

I know what both me and my husband like

Now I'm in my late forties, I know what I'm doing when it comes to sex. I know what I like, what turns me off and how to bring pleasure to myself and my husband. Being together for over 24 years and married for 17 of them, we have had great sex in the past but are having even better sex now because we talk about it and show each other what we want, need and enjoy. Even now, it still surprises us when we discover that we both have the same thoughts about the same sexual thing or fantasy.

I know how to let go

Now I'm older, I find it easier to let go and enjoy sex, rather than filling my head with all the stuff I have to do, or replaying situations and conversations from the day. Sometimes it can be hard to switch off the chatter in your head but I have to give myself a shake and start concentrating on the pleasurable sensations running through my body, not on whether or not if I've done the packed lunches for my children, who are really old enough to do their own - I need to let go, they won't starve!

Finding my Inner Dominatrix

My husband loves this and so do I, it doesn't happen every time but quite often, but there is something very sexy about dominating your man. Too many women I speak to say they just lie there and expect their man to do all the work, then complain when it isn't any good. I used to do the same, but now I take control, I find I have amazing blended orgasms.

I don't put up with rubbish sex any more

As mentioned above, I put up with rubbish sex in my twenties because I didn't know any better. Though I experienced vaginismus, I wouldn't tell my partner for fear of letting him down sexually. When he found out, he was saddened that he had caused me pain and I had put up with it so he could enjoy sex. Now, if it feels uncomfortable, I tell him and we stop.

But many women and men endure bad sex to placate their partners. Pretending you enjoy what they are doing when you are busy making a shopping list in your head means they think you're enjoying it and they will continue doing it in that way. Sex should never feel painful or uncomfortable, and you should not endure sex in this way. It could indicate that something is wrong.

Thank goodness for lube!

I never used sexual lubricant in my twenties as I thought it was something old women used. As a former nurse, I used KY jelly on the hospital wards for various procedures, such as for rectal examinations and smear tests.

Having had problems with thrush, cystitis and vaginal irritation, I didn't realise that lubricants and spermicidal gels can cause such problems, having never been offered any advice by my GP.

Having discovered YES organic lubricants 7 years ago, we have never looked back. They've been one of the best finds for our sex life and I won't have sex without it. We just wish we'd found it after having our children.

There is an assumption in younger men and women that women should just be wet and ready for sex, even though hormonal changes, stress, illness and medication can all affect vaginal secretions every month.

Dry sex is not pleasant and can be painful, leading to tiny cuts in the vaginal wall which may get infected. Using a good lubricant nourishes the tissues of the vaginal walls, making them feel moisturised and more pliable.

I discovered sex toys

Owning a sex toy company allows me to experiment with new sex toys to find one perfect for my needs. Having said that, my husband and I use a variety of sex toys that offer different sexual sensations so I don't think just one will ever do.

We also know that jelly, rubber or latex sex toys are bad news and should be avoided at all costs, which is why we don't sell them.

Surprisingly, many younger people don't use sex toys within their relationships to avoid upsetting their partner, yet sex toys used during sexual intercourse can increase your sexual pleasure, not diminish it.

Many women I've spoken to believe that sex toys can be a threat to a relationship but studies have shown that most men are happy for their partners to use them. Some women like using a sex toy, such as a vibrator, but think their partner is strange if he wants to use one, yet there are many great [sex toys for men](#) which can increase sexual pleasure for you both.

I make noise

Making sounds of pleasure will encourage your partner to continue what they're doing. Most men find responsiveness a greater turn on than the way you look. Encouraging your partner turns you both on as they are doing something that pleases you and you get to enjoy it. This works both ways.

I'm more confident about the way I look

I've had three children and my tummy has never been the same since I had my youngest, 11 years ago. But lying there sucking in your tummy means you're not concentrating on the sex and what's happening to your body. Most men don't give a stuff about how you look, they love confidence. Too much emphasis is put on being perfect when your partner loves your smile, the dimple on your chin, your luscious buttocks or beautiful eyes.

I have had weight issues in the past, but now I have found the right balance: eating healthily, drinking alcohol occasionally and taking regular exercise. I quite like the way I look now, which is something I probably wouldn't have said five years ago. Writing about sex has made me more sexually confident; I've always liked sex but I love it now.

I hope we will continue to have fantastic sex until we die. I know there are ways in which we can keep our sexual intimacy alive into our twilight years even if we are too arthritic to make love.

And if my hubbie goes before me, I know I'm making a silicone copy of his penis so I can still enjoy him.