# Risk of Divorce

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## Risk of Divorce During Menopause

You do your best to deal with the things menopause modifies about you and your life. The physical symptoms directly impact your daily functioning. Hot flashes have you feeling uncomfortable during the day. Night sweats make it more difficult to get a good night's rest. The changes in bladder control having you running to the bathroom at all hours, day and night.

The psychological symptoms make their presence known indirectly. The increased risk for depression and anxiety are largely due to fluctuating hormone levels because your mind cannot keep up with the changes. You confuse the physical symptoms as mental health symptoms. The low self-esteem is due to the perceived changes your body is going through. The weight gain and hair loss associated with menopause force you to rethink the way you see yourself.

After physical and psychological health, social health is affected by menopause. It is easy to see that the way you feel physically and psychologically influences the way you relate to other people in your life. If your symptoms are high, your social health will be more negatively affected. In turn, if you social health is poor, your physical and psychological health are at greater risk. Menopause is not only your problem. It involves all people in your life.

Being a perimenopausal woman in her 40s, 50s or 60s, who is your primary social support? Who affects you more than anyone and who is effected by you more than anyone? Chances are you answered your husband. The bad news is many marriages end during the menopause years. Because of this, finding ways to improve your physical and psychological symptoms while improving your relationship is essential for a happy life during perimenopause and beyond.

### Divorce Contributors

You know that menopause is not just about menopause. There are many aspects of your life occurring simultaneously. Each piece plays their part in either making your life better or worse. Consider these factors that contribute to divorce during the perimenopause years:

- **Empty nest** – During this period of time, so much about your life is changing besides menopause. Chances are good your children are leaving the home creating the empty nest syndrome. This refers to feelings of depression and anxiety that accompany the shift in the household when child leave. Whether it is to college, work, military or marriage, their departure is met with mixed feelings. You know that you will always be their mother, but somehow you feel less important and necessary.
- **Loss of loved ones** – As you age, so do the others in your life. It is only a matter of time before you experience the death of people close to you. The loss of your friends, coworkers and family members create loads of stress that will spread to other areas of your life.

*Next page: ways to prevent divorce in menopause.*

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- **Caring for elderly family** – As your children leave the home, your responsibilities may shift from the younger generation to the older generation. As your family ages, they may require more attention and assistance from you. These shifting roles create uncertainty and tension in your life.
- **Career change** – During this time of transition, you may be returning to work after a period off or reinvesting time and energy into your career because of the lessened responsibilities at home. Whatever the case, the change in work status can create stress and changing roles at home for you and your husband.

**Divorce Diminishers**

If your relationship has a chance of survival, you must act quickly and decidedly to undo further damage. At times, you may feel that avoiding and escaping the relationship is best. This is rarely the case, though. Successful relationships are built on increasing positive experiences more than avoiding the negatives. Do you want to boost the relationship and keep the influence of menopause to a minimum? Here's how:

- **Talk menopause.** Unsurprisingly, starting to improve your relationship begins with communication. After all, why do most marriages end? They end because of a lack of communication. Not only a lack of communication, they end because of a lack of assertive communication. Speak to your husband about your experience of menopause. Share with him the physical and emotional symptoms of menopause so that he has an opportunity to assist with your needs. Do not assume that he knows what you are going through, but do assume that he is interested in helping. Likewise, be comfortable and understanding of his confusion and answer his questions. This area is trial and error. You will need several conversations to express your views in a clear, concrete way.

- **Talk sex.** Sex is a significant part of any marriage. Not enough can lead to problems while too much can lead to problems of another sort. Women report experiencing changes in sexual interest, comfort and pleasure during perimenopause and life after menopause. Some enjoy the freedom that comes with not worrying about pregnancy and being liberated from birth control. Others report that feeling less physically appealing to their husbands, low libido and vaginal dryness are reasons to decrease sexual activities. Communicate your concerns and frustrations to your husband using a teammate approach. Too often, people become confrontational with others that want the same thing. Together you can accomplish more than working individually.

*Next page: how husbands can get involved.*

**Divorce Diminishers**

- **Have fun in the relationship.** Relationships begin heading for disaster when fun takes a backseat to trying to win arguments. Without fun, hostility builds and grudges continue. Without fun, the simple misunderstanding blows up into a major conflict. To regain fun, try some of the activities you enjoyed together previously. Since these already have pleasurable associations, it will be easy to fall back into positive routines. Begin to add new adventures and activities into the repertoire. These will add hope for growth and opportunity in the future.

- **Have fun outside of the relationship.** Becoming too immersed and involved in one relationship leaves you dependent on that other person for your happiness and well-being. Avoid putting all of your eggs in basket by diversifying your social outings. Spending more time with friends and family will recharge your batteries and clear out some anger. Go to dinner. Go to the movies or out for a walk to keep the romance alive. With this, you can return to the relationship with a fresh perspective and renewed motivation to improve your status. Even if this tip does not improve the relationship directly, it will boost your mood and self-esteem by spending time with your supports.

- **Sometimes people put too much pressure on the relationship.** In your attempts to solve problems or force closeness, you can actually do more bad than good. Check in with yourself and your husband. Maybe this afternoon, this day or this week is not a good time to have a conversation or do something fun. Maybe your menopause symptoms are too strong to ignore. Take a break from the relationship to focus on you. This does not mean that he has to sleep in a motel or even the couch. It only means that you are pausing the issue to address later. Be sure to make time for it later, though. Issues that you leave unresolved for too long will fester into bigger problems down the road.

**What about the Husbands**

No. The guys do not get a free pass on this issue. They are just as responsible for the well-being of the relationship as you are. The good news is that all the tips above apply to the men in your life. Work on the steps together with transparency so both of your know where you stand in the relationship. Encourage your husband to learn more about menopause without any negative preconceived notions. Choose a time to separate when there is lack of progress and come back in one hour or one day.

**Conclusion**

Perimenopause and the time around menopause is a period of great shifting and transitions in the life of a woman. Acknowledge menopause and the other aspects adding stress to your life. From there, take steps grounded in assertive communication to aid the marriage. With hard work, your mate can be your best teammate.