

Cheat sheet 3: How to talk to your partner about perimenopause without making it awkward

You thought you'd already mastered all the tough stuff and now you've got to explain this hormonal shit-storm to your partner. Here's how to talk to a male or non-perimenopausal partner about what you're experiencing without either of you running for the hills. (You'll also find a partner's survival guide in the Team Hot Flush section on page 277.)

1. Do your homework

Before you sit them down, make sure you've got your facts straight. No, I don't mean memorising scientific journals. I mean knowing enough about what's happening to your body so you can explain it without turning it into a biology lecture. Keep it simple: 'My hormones are out of whack, and it's causing everything from hot flushes to mood swings that I can't control.' They don't need to know the exact role of estrogen (though bonus points if they want to!), but they do need to understand that your body is in hormonal chaos.

2. Pick your moment

No one wants to have a serious chat about heavy bleeding and brain fog when they're halfway through dinner or right before bed. Choose a time when you're both relaxed, maybe during a walk or a quiet weekend morning. Don't ambush them right after you've snapped about something trivial. Timing is everything.

3. Use humour (but keep it real)

Make it light but keep it honest. You could say, 'Remember when I said I was cold and then two minutes later I was sweating like



a marathon runner? Yeah, that's peri for you. Welcome to the hot flushes.' Or, if your partner is a bloke, say to him, 'So imagine at age 50 your nutsack fell off? You'd be feeling a bit different too.' Laughter breaks the ice, but don't dismiss the seriousness of what you're going through. You're riding the peri wave and they better learn to surf too.

4. Explain the emotional stuff

You need to explain that hormones don't just make your body freak out, they mess with your emotions too. Be upfront: 'Some- times I might cry for no reason, or I might feel anxious even when nothing's wrong. It's not you, it's my hormones. I just need you to understand and please don't take it personally.' They'll appreciate the heads-up, and it'll help them see that your mood swings aren't about them leaving wet towels on the bed again.

5. Be honest about sex

Perimenopause can be a libido killer. If your sex drive has plummeted or sex hurts due to dryness, don't suffer in silence. Bring it up without making it weird. 'I'm going through some changes, and it's affecting how I feel about sex. Let's talk about what works for us now, so we're both comfortable and happy.' Then let them know you'll be using some vaginal estrogen to help the dryness (this shows you're being proactive) and explain it's time to embrace lube. Give them details so they understand what's happening with your body and that it doesn't mean you love them less.

6. Ask for their support

This isn't just your battle. Ask them to be your ally in this hormone-fuelled war. Let them know what you need: 'When I'm having a rough day, it'd really help if you could be patient with me, even when I'm snarky.' Or perhaps, 'Sometimes I just need a hug when