

DON'T PAUSE YOUR LOVE LIFE



HOW TO DATE *CONFIDENTLY* AND
HAPPILY THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE

BY KATE TAYLOR FOR  **Ourtime**

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INTRODUCTION



You might be **SINGLE**, but you are **NOT ALONE**.

Every woman goes through the menopause. But it can still feel like a very lonely experience. And trying to date while your hair is drier than a haystack, you can't read the cocktail menu, and **everyone** gets on your nerves, can make you believe you'll never find love again.

Stop. Grab your fan, shove another handful of ice down your bra, and read this Guide. I've been helping singles find love since 2006. I met my own husband online in 2009. And I've been in Surgical Menopause since 2022, after a hysterectomy.

KATE is one of the UK's leading Relationship Experts. She is the author of five books about sex and dating, has been a Sex Expert for several publications, including GQ and Readers Digest, and has worked with Ourtime and Match as a Dating Coach since 2006. She was also voted Dating Writer of the Year at the UK Dating Awards. Find out more about Kate at her website, lovekatetaylor.com

Everything you've felt, I've felt too. **I got through it, and so will you.**

In this Guide I developed with Ourtime, the dating app for people over 50, you'll find simple, effective advice that you can start using NOW to improve your menopausal love life.

LET'S GO!

Love, Kate Taylor



ABOUT

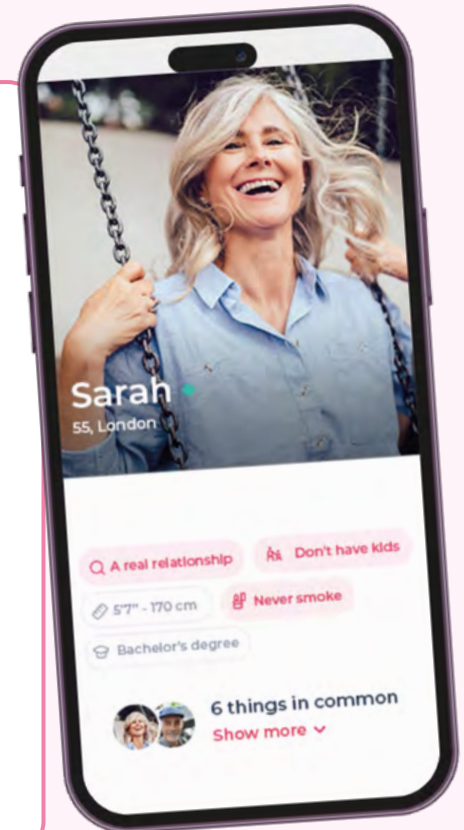


Launched in 2017, Ourtime is a dating service dedicated to **singles over 50**. Ourtime offers 50+ singles a safe environment to **meet like-minded people and share special moments**.

Ourtime has a variety of features and offers to bring 50+ singles together:

- More than 70 interest filters and audio recordings for the profile
- Live Coaching videos
- Audio & video call
- And attractive local activities in different cities

Ourtime is operated by Meetic and its affiliated companies in Europe, which are part of Match Group, a leading provider of digital technologies designed to help people make meaningful connections. For more information, visit www.ourtime.co.uk



Ourtime conducted a study ¹ of over 1,000 women who have been through or are currently experiencing the menopause, **revealing that women who are going through the hormonal “change” are taking back the power in their dating journey.** **This Guide lifts the lid on the research findings.**

1. Research conducted by OnePoll across 1,000 UK women who are perimenopausal, menopausal or postmenopausal from the 15th to the 19th July, 2024.



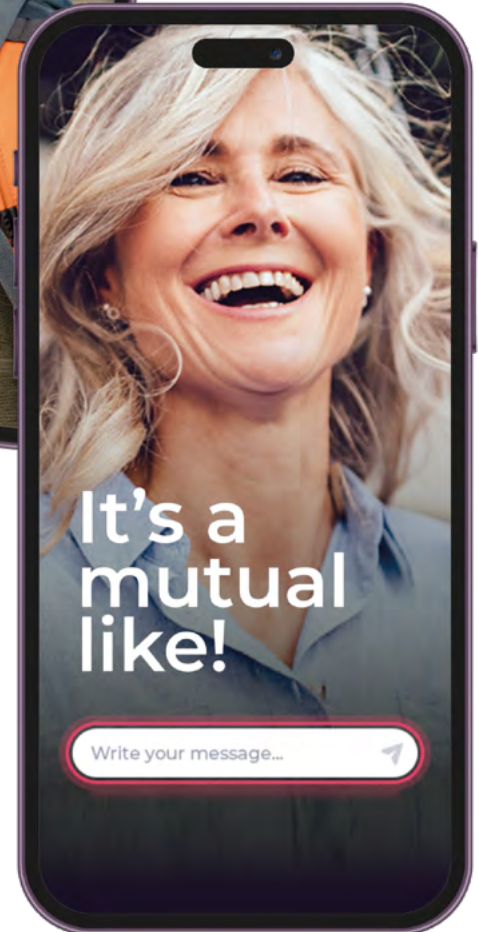
5 REASONS TO DATE DURING MENOPAUSE

*MORE THAN
ONE IN 10 (11%)*
women say they have a
better understanding of
what they want from a
partner since starting/going
through the menopause, and
even more **(18%)** have more
confidence during this life
stage. What's more, the same
amount **(18%)** now feel they
are able to focus on what
they want for the first time.

*“Having friends
to moan to about
the menopause
helps, and making
sure my partner
understands what
I'm going through.
He's more patient
as a result.”*

*Becky, 50
from London*

02



It can be easy to think, if I'm
already struggling, why would
I make my menopause even
more complicated by dating?
Shouldn't I hunker down and
wait it out at home? With a pet?
And pizza?

Maybe... But there's evidence
to support that getting out of
your comfort zone could relieve
many of menopause's most
annoying symptoms.



It won't cure your hot flushes, but it can help with the following:

1. Orgasms keep your intimate area young

Having regular orgasms can relieve some of the most uncomfortable symptoms of low oestrogen, like vaginal dryness and loss of elasticity. (For much more on sex, see Chapter 4.)

2. Cuddles can lower cortisol

Cuddling, kissing and having sex all encourage your body to release endorphins that can reduce your levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. As raised cortisol can contribute to abdominal fat, there's a chance they might even flatten your stomach. It's a small chance, but I'll take it!

3. Meeting new people can help brain fog

Stimulating your brain is one of the best ways to boost cognitive function. So, get online with Ourtime and go out with William.

5. Socialising is a natural painkiller

Flirt away the heartache, or foot ache, or just that random new twinge in your shoulder. Enjoying positive social interactions (like a date) and physical intimacy (like a goodnight kiss) can stimulate the release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers.

4. Dates can reduce anxiety



Having fun (whether that's going out dancing with Steve from Slough, or arguing about the best Smiths' album with Bill from Berkshire) can elevate your brain's levels of serotonin, which can reduce anxiety.



PREPARE TO GET BACK OUT THERE

OVER HALF (56%)
of women felt they were not prepared for symptoms of the menopause.

It's always a big step to start dating again. But add in all the hormonal changes that menopause brings (plus often a sharp drop in self-confidence) and it can feel more scary than exciting.

I've been helping women over 50 to find love for two decades. Here are my top tips, plus some advice from other menopausal women on what helped them rediscover their mojo.

"The hot flushes are the worst. I've upped my walking, am doing bootcamp and spending more time with friends, which all – thankfully – seem to be helping."

*Dee, 54
from London*

MINDSET

"A daily ritual of finding something to be thankful for really helped me. I saw through the gloom, and it started each day off on a positive note."

*Helenna, 55
from Berkshire*

✓ **Remember, you don't have to appeal to EVERYONE**

You might have greyer hair now than when you first started dating. You might have gone up a dress size or two, or down a few IQ points (due to brain fog). That's fine! The ultimate goal of dating is to find one person who is right for you.

✓ **You don't have to be a rock-climbing super-goddess with a charity foundation**

Most people simply want a kind and friendly partner who they can meet for dates, weekends away and cosy nights in. Don't panic if you've spent the last 20 years working, raising kids or looking after ageing parents – most of us have!

✓ **Be your true self**

When you create your dating profile, be yourself. Mention activities you love to do, so people can easily ask you out on dates. Use flattering but recent photos and stay upbeat. It's that easy. You'll probably find that your tastes and hobbies have changed during menopause; this is a good time to think about the types of dates you really enjoy. Mention only those.

✓ **People over 50 find love EVERY DAY**

No, you haven't missed your chance. You shouldn't give up on love and open a cocker-spaniel rescue sanctuary in West Wales (unless that's your dream!). Every morning, repeat an uplifting mantra like, "I am open to love, and deserving of happiness."

✓ **Start slowly**

Ourtime's dating site runs fun, low-key Speed Dating online events every Sunday, to help you meet new people without pressure. It's a great place to boost your confidence about talking to new people. If you'd rather start slowly and not rush to meet, that's fine. Always feel strong about communicating

boundaries in a clear, friendly way; the right person for you will respect them.

Later on, you can use Ourtime's Video Date function to go on virtual, at-home dates with lovely potential partners. It's a great way to soothe your nerves if menopause anxiety can make you a bit shy.

DIET

“I am Indian, so I have been eating 30 veg and fruit a week, fermented foods, nuts and seeds, and shed loads of turmeric from birth. And I very rarely drink. Menopause is not unrelenting misery for me; parts of it are actually quite great.”

*Kavitha, 52
from Sussex*

✓ **Eat a diet that makes you feel good**

Focus on eating healthily so you'll feel your best when you start going on dates. If you've been comfort-eating or living on “Girl Dinners” like cheese and crackers in front of the TV, try to eat balanced meals filled with protein, vegetables and fruit. You're going to need your strength if the dates go well...!

✓ **Reduce alcohol**

Drinking worsens menopause symptoms like hot flushes and insomnia, and it's not great for dating, either. Reduce your alcohol to a sensible weekly limit so you can keep a clear head.

✓ **Drink plenty of water**

Staying hydrated can reduce depression, improve your skin and hair texture, AND boost your libido.



EXERCISE & HOBBIES

“I’ve taken up kickboxing and it’s 100% been the best. Knowing I’ve got somewhere to go each week where I can scream and hit stuff legitimately has been very therapeutic.”

*Jai, 48
from Surrey*

✓ Find date-friendly exercise

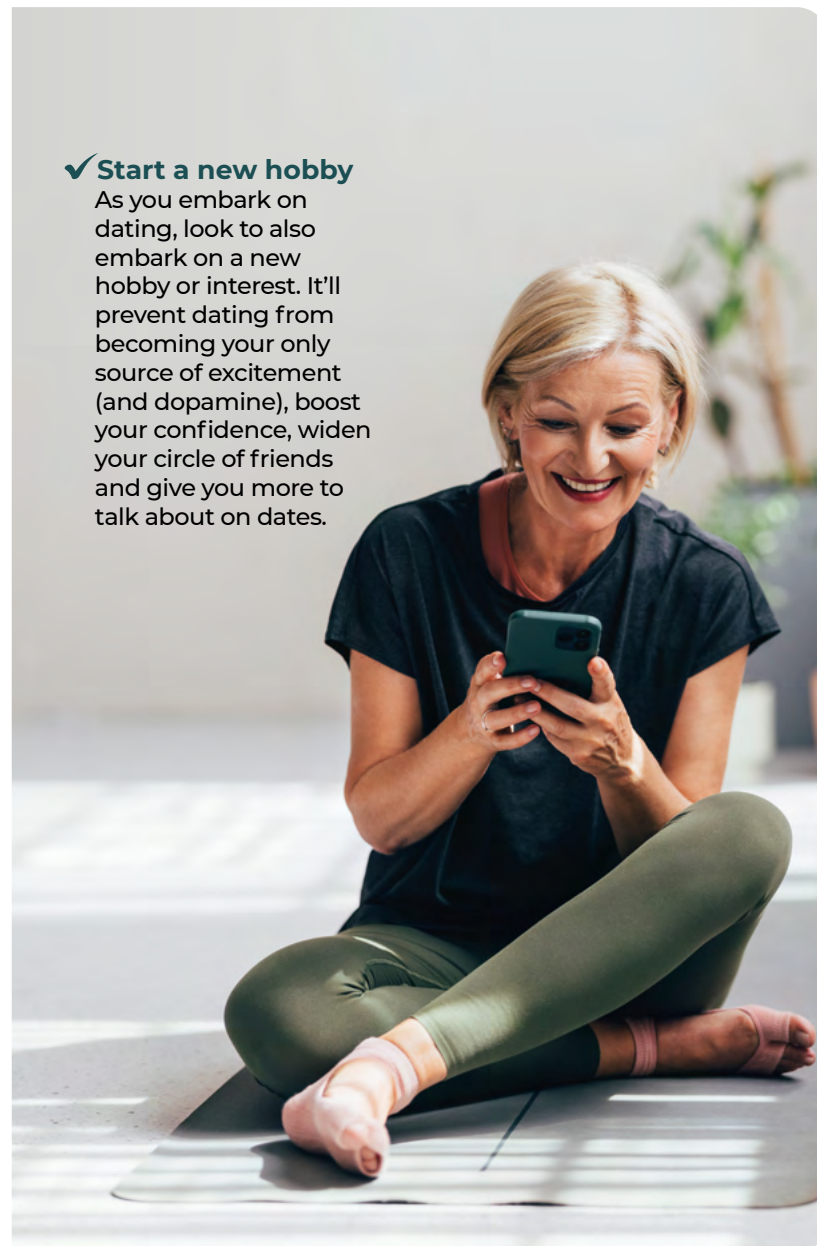
Exercise is the best thing you can do when you’re menopausal. It’s also one of the best things you can do on dates! Take up a sociable activity like dancing, tennis or rambling and invite sporty new partners to join you.

✓ Embrace singles events

A fun way to meet new people your own age is to attend singles events. Ourtime regularly holds friendly meet-ups where you can meet other eligible 50+ singles in person while doing a fun activity, like wine tasting, cookery classes, or simple drinks. You’ll find details of all the upcoming events in the Events section of the Ourtime website or app. (Note: you don’t have to subscribe to view the events.)

✓ Start a new hobby

As you embark on dating, look to also embark on a new hobby or interest. It’ll prevent dating from becoming your only source of excitement (and dopamine), boost your confidence, widen your circle of friends and give you more to talk about on dates.



SEX AND THE MENOPAUSE

A COMMON MISCONCEPTION about menopause is that your sex drive disappears (believed by **18%** of women), while **23%** of single women were concerned about the impact menopause would have on their dating life. However, **26%** admitted they needn't have worried, with the average menopausal singleton going on **three dates** since the start. It also emerged **nearly half of women (46%)** found there to be no change to their romantic relationships since starting to experience symptoms.

If your dates go well, you're going to want to move things upstairs. But that can be the place where the menopause symptoms are felt most acutely. Here's how to make things more *Bridgerton*, less *Vicar of Dibley*.

"Yoga helps with feeling more flexible... not to mention less achy."

*Catherine, 54
from Surrey*

SEXUAL CHANGES DURING MENOPAUSE

Loss of libido and less pleasure

Declining testosterone levels can put a dampener on your desire. You'll want sex less often, and when you do have sex, your orgasms can feel weaker.

Painful sex

As your oestrogen levels drop, the tissues in your vagina and vulva can become thinner, weaker and drier. Sex can be uncomfortable or even painful as the vaginal walls lose elasticity. You could also feel itchy or sore in and around the vagina as it loses its natural moisture.

HOW TO FIX IT

- ✓ Ask your GP for a "total testosterone" blood test and ask about topical testosterone gel.
- ✓ If you can't take HRT, there is some evidence that you can increase testosterone through natural means like lifting weights, getting 20 minutes of direct sunlight a day, or eating more fish oil, dairy products, leafy greens, legumes, fruits and vegetables that contain flavonoids, and oysters.

HOW TO FIX IT

- ✓ Speak to your doctor about topical oestrogen (applied inside the vagina using a pessary) which can be very effective.
- ✓ If you can't take HRT, vaginal moisturisers like Vagisan or Vagisil can relieve symptoms.
- ✓ Have more sex! Regular sex can encourage your vagina to keep producing its natural lubrication.

Bladder weakness

If you find yourself running to the loo, or having more accidents when you laugh, cough, sneeze or jump, you might be suffering from weak pelvic-floor muscles caused by (you've guessed it) reduced oestrogen. While not technically a sexual problem, those same weak muscles can make sex less enjoyable.

Urinary tract infections

Your vagina is the natural home to bacteria – some good, some bad. As oestrogen drops, the bacterial balance changes, leaving more bad than good. This can cause UTIs, which can make sex painful. The symptoms are a frequent need to wee, or pain.

HOW TO FIX IT

- ✓ Pelvic-floor squeezes are a menopause must. If you're not sure you're doing them correctly, see a Woman's Health Physio for a personal lesson.
- ✓ Use online resources like the NHS Squeezy App to remind yourself to do daily exercises.
- ✓ If you don't feel confident doing exercises yourself, investigate electric pelvic-floor muscle-toners and vaginal weights.
- ✓ Have more sex! Practise squeezing your muscles until your partner feels a firm grip.

HOW TO FIX IT

- ✓ Topical oestrogen (applied inside the vagina using a pessary) can rebalance your natural bacteria.
- ✓ Stay hydrated. Drinking water can help you avoid UTIs or flush them out faster.
- ✓ Ask your local health shop about natural remedies like cranberry juice, garlic supplements, or D-Mannose tablets.



MENOPAUSE-FRIENDLY SEX TIPS

✓ Foreplay, foreplay, foreplay

Take time to rev your engine before anyone parks in your garage. Menopausal women take longer to become lubricated, and for the vaginal walls to expand ready for sex. Try oral sex, 69, or mutual masturbation for at least 15 minutes.

✓ Adapt your favourite positions

Menopause can cause joint pain, which makes some positions uncomfortable. Don't give up – get creative. Move sex to the sofa to make Girl on Top easier on your knees. Slip a pillow under your hips to support your lower back during Missionary. Have sex after a hot bath or shower to relieve arthritis aches.

✓ Watch for “responsive desire”

There are two types of lust: spontaneous, and responsive. Spontaneous is a sudden urge to get down to it, like you might feel five minutes into a Tom Hardy film. Responsive is a slow-burner, when you start to feel sexy because you're in a steamy environment (like a hotel room) or doing something erotic (like dancing). Women often feel

less spontaneous desire as they age, but the responsive urge is still very much there. Look out for it and encourage it. Wear your nicest lingerie. Make your bedroom look seductive, not just cosy. And keep a dirty diary where you record when you felt sexy, and what you were doing, so you learn what sets you off.

✓ Be more adventurous

The wilder the sex, the more comfortable it can be over 50. You might never have considered a Sex Swing before, but they're blissful when you aren't as bendy as you were. Anal Sex can be an erotic alternative to standard sex, and 69s can provide hours of pleasure without any pain.

✓ Safe Sex is still important

The NHS recommends using contraception every time you have sex until it's been **two full years** since your last period. You might be using a progesterone coil or pill as part of your HRT. But even if you are, condoms are still a good choice with new lovers, as they protect you from sexually transmitted diseases. But a word of warning: oil-based lubes can weaken latex condoms, so only use water-based or silicone lubes when he's wrapped up.



HOW TO COPE WITH ROLLER- COASTER EMOTIONS

23% of women feel more carefree and A QUARTER (25%) feel more comfortable in themselves since going through the menopause.

“Me and my friend have what we call a ‘Scream Stop’. We text each other when we feel like we are about to kill and then meet at the Scream Stop. We have a massive rant or a cry, scream, then go back home feeling much better.”

*Sarah, 49
from Edinburgh*

Menopause rage is real

As oestrogen declines, our levels of cortisol – the hormone we release when we’re stressed – rise. This can mean we’re much more likely to fly off the handle. That’s almost bearable when we’re dealing with friends and family who knew our pre-menopause calm self. But with a new partner, it can cause big misunderstandings.

It’s normal to feel more insecure

Low self-confidence is a classic symptom of menopause. It can be triggered by hormonal reasons like low testosterone, but also by all the physical and mental changes. You might dislike your new body shape, memory loss, thinning hair, or the fine new moustache that sprang up overnight.

HOW TO COPE

- ✓ Try going for a walk before or during your date. Ideally, walk through nature. Walking lowers your cortisol levels and can calm you down.
- ✓ Avoid making big decisions (like dumping someone) for 24 hours. I’d be too scared to say this to your face but there IS a chance you’re not thinking rationally.
- ✓ If your rage is happening regularly, explain to your partner that it’s a menopause symptom and that you can’t help it.
- ✓ Look into natural remedies, like B Vitamins, yoga, or regular meditation.

HOW TO COPE

- ✓ Talking therapy is very helpful. Ask your GP for a referral to a counsellor, or join a menopause support group or community.
- ✓ Reach out to other women. Rant and commiserate with your closest menopausal friends. Arrange some girls’ nights out where you can boost each other’s confidence.
- ✓ Listen to self-hypnosis videos on YouTube that promise a confidence boost. At the very least, they can help you go to sleep.

You might feel needier or clingier

As our confidence wobbles, we might need more reassurance from other people. You might find yourself being clingier with romantic partners, or jealous and possessive.

You might start ruminating or overthinking

Low oestrogen can make our brains more prone to obsessive thoughts. You might never have been the depressive, anxious type before, but now you spend hours worrying. It's important to nip this in the bud: women are most at risk from suicide between the ages of 40 – 60, when menopause is at its peak.

HOW TO COPE

- ✓ Resist the urge to ask new partners for too much reassurance. But explain that sometimes you feel a bit insecure and tell them things that help you, like staying in touch, or settling any issues straight away.
- ✓ Don't cyber-stalk! Resist the temptation to follow all their social-media profiles or to add them to Find My Friends. Ignorance genuinely is bliss sometimes.
- ✓ Fill your spare time with engaging hobbies that take your mind off who you're dating, if only for a few hours.

HOW TO COPE

- ✓ See your GP. While I don't believe antidepressants are a substitute for HRT, they can work well together to improve your mood.
- ✓ Exercise is a natural antidepressant. Try to get out for a walk every day, even if it's only five minutes around the block.
- ✓ Try meditation. Mindfulness is proven to help you control overthinking.





HOW TO TALK TO YOUR ROMANTIC PARTNER ABOUT THE MENOPAUSE

79% OF WOMEN say their romantic interest dealt with them opening up to them about their experience with the menopause very well, and **54%** of women believe more honest and open conversations would help both men and women better manage it.

The more your partner knows about your menopause, the more sympathetic they'll feel and the more helpful they'll be. But some women feel reluctant to open up, worrying that it'll make them seem older or less sexy. If that's you, this chapter could help.

"I sat my partner down and we watched the Davina documentary together. It really helped him, which helped us as a couple."

*Barbara, 50
from London*



✓ **Reveal information on a "need to know" timeline**

I always recommend getting to know a partner gradually. If you share too much too early, you could feel vulnerable if the relationship ends. On the first few dates, I'd focus on general, light-hearted subjects like books, music, hobbies and interests. As your relationship progresses, you can be more open.

✓ **Give them room to help you**

If you've been single for a while it can be hard to ask for help, but they are probably dying to be of service. Tell them about a problem (like feeling hot at night) and give them space to find a solution. Siobhan (51, from Berkshire) did this: "My partner installed a small fan on my side of the bed, with a switch right by my head, to help with night sweats." If they are not always trying to help you, they might not be the one.

✓ **Let your partner know if you just want to vent**

If you'd rather just have a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on, tell them that upfront. For example, "Can you please just hug me in silence while I tell you about the awful day I had?"

✓ **Be patient (to a point) if he talks about the Male Menopause**

If you have any kind of symptom, you can almost guarantee that a man will suddenly also have a symptom! Have some sympathy. Men's testosterone levels drop after 40, making them more prone to erectile problems, fatigue and depression. This is known as the Male Menopause. Be open with each other, and use it as a chance to demonstrate how you enjoy being supported and cared for.



Ourtime

Dating for like-minded singles over 50