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Valentine's is for 'over-50s' too!

Valentine's Day is just around the corner and for many of us that means including romance as part of the festivities. But maybe intimacy just doesn't happen as easily as it once did, or you've experienced some discomfort during sex that is causing you to have second thoughts about the whole idea.

Some of what you are experiencing may be due to perimenopause and menopause. Fluctuating, or diminishing hormones can pose a challenge to maintaining the romance in your relationship.

Here's some things to keep in mind as you plan your Valentine's celebration:

1. The older you get, the longer it may take to become aroused. Lower estrogen levels means it may take longer for the vagina to swell and lubricate when sexually aroused. But the good news is that most people maintain their ability to have normal orgasms.
2. Less estrogen in your system means the vagina becomes less elastic which may make sex less comfortable - or even painful. Learn more about vaginal atrophy (make this a hot link) and what you can do about it. One option is to try a lubricant. Water-based sexual lubricants or lubricants made specifically for the older woman are widely available. These come in gels and suppositories, and should be applied liberally to the vagina just prior to sex.
3. Talk to your doctor about a prescription for a local estrogen that can be applied into the vagina. This will usually enhance blood flow to the vaginal area thereby improving both sensation and lubrication. Local estrogen is different from other forms of hormone therapy because it doesn't go through the blood system so it may relieve some of your concerns about HT in general.
4. When it comes to sex, 'if you don't use it, you lose it'. The more you have sex that includes vaginal penetration, the easier it will be to maintain lubrication and elasticity. So put your 'romance dates' on your calendar even after Valentine's Day!

It is not unusual to have concerns about your sex life, especially if midlife health challenges are causing changes you weren't even aware of. There are lots of [resources](#) referenced on this web site that can help you learn more about sex after 50 and what you can do to make a difference in this part of your life.