



# Body Talk



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**Makeup artist Jo Menneer explains what menopausal women have taught her about self-belief and feeling more sexy in your own skin after losing weight.**

**W**hen a woman experiences menopause, she may readily discuss the hot flushes, night sweats and irregular periods with her friends and family.

What I've learned over the years is that the invisible side-effects that can occur, such as low self-esteem, mood swings, feeling tearful and even anxiety, can be harder to detect and treat.

As a marketing director and make-up artist at Divine Divas, a boudoir photography studio based in Bath, I've been privileged to speak to many women at various stages of their lives. The menopause is just that – another stage of ups and downs that should be discussed in the same way that we talk about starting periods, pregnancy and so on.



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• 55 year old Fiona Gummerson wanted to feel sexy again after losing 2.5 stone.



• Alison Holvey, 52, wanted to reward herself after her weight loss journey.

### More than just hormones

Through the women I've met, I've realised that feeling sexy and confident in your own skin is about more than just your hormones. How you feel about yourself, how your partner makes you feel and what else is going on in your life can all contribute to your experience of this natural process of aging.

One of my clients, 55-year-old Fiona Gummerson, experienced an early menopause as a result of a forced hysterectomy. Fiona told me: "I'd always been quite athletic but when the menopause kicked in I started putting on weight quite quickly and easily. I also suffered from a loss of libido and didn't feel sexy in any shape or form."

Fiona realised that she had to address the negative voice that we all have inside our heads – the one that puts us down or can create a sense of hopelessness and she turned things around. Through a combination of diet and exercise she managed to lose 2.5 stones and as a result, built up the confidence to book a shoot with us which she says has been a real confidence boost.

If you think of your body as an engine it needs good fuel and constant maintenance, especially at a time of life like this where lethargy, low mood and irritability can kick in. For your body and mind to be at its optimum level, the majority of food you consume should be nutritionally fabulous!

### Weight loss journey

52-year-old Alison Holvey came to us as a reward to herself following her weight loss journey. Her menopause had begun in her late 40s and said "the loss of libido together with the weight gain made me feel like I was being attacked on all fronts". She spoke of something many women experience at this time, the feeling of a loss of identity.



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Alison embarked on a weight loss plan together with her husband by joining a slimming club, taking up regular exercise and watching what she ate helping her to lose 2.5 stones in just over a year.

“When you start losing weight, you want to keep going. I did suffer some setbacks for example, putting weight back at times because of menopausal side effects like water retention, but with support, perseverance and taking time to reflect, I was able to get back on track. It's very important to control the menopause rather than let IT control YOU”.

Alison went on to book a boudoir shoot with us to celebrate how she felt about herself and said her husband has been regularly sending her flowers ever since!

### Whatever your size or shape

What I've learned is that although no woman can control what sort of side-effects or symptoms will occur during the menopausal period, she can determine what her attitude will be and this is a powerful tool in working with, not against the experience. Whatever your size, shape, age or challenge, this is a time for self-care and by implementing small changes that will fit with your personal experience, you will be able to love the skin you're in.