

Perimenopause: Surprise!

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

Perimenopause. Starts at age 35. Who knew?

Not me. Yes, I'm an RN (not practicing anymore, but my license, though in mothballs, is still in good standing). This is where ever-increasing specialization can really screw up your day. Give me someone with an axe in his head, a gunshot wound to the abdomen, arms and legs ripped around backwards from hitting a tree at a hundred miles an hour, a heart attack, a blocked airway ... I'm your woman.

Hit me with ovarian treachery that has evidently been in the works behind my back for the past nine years, and I'm left with a poleaxed, "WTF?"

Little bastards have been digging their tunnel with a spoon for NINE YEARS, and I just realized what those little piles of dirt and rock on the ground meant when a friend, also 44 years old, dropped by to hang out a couple of weeks ago, and said something about "us" being in perimenopause.

And my first reaction was, "No. Not me. ME? No. Not ME. My mother didn't even start dealing with that crap until she was in her middle fifties."

35. Surprise, surprise, surprise.

So here's the deal. Back when I was twenty-six-ish, I had a (male) gynecologist I worked with in the ER tell me, "I don't know why you girls get so attached to those things [uterus, ovaries]. You know they're going to cause trouble in later life. You should all just have them taken out when you're done having kids."

To which I replied, "When you think it's a good idea to have your prostate and testicles removed because they're going to cause you trouble in later life, we'll talk."

He did not find this amusing. But, dammit, neither did I.

At that point, I became wary of advice from men where my reproductive system was involved. And unfortunately, from reading a stack of books I acquired after my friend went on her way, leaving me in shellshock, that mistrust was not misplaced. No, I do not want to take your corporation-profiting, body-wrecking, patentable designer drugs, you soul-sucking cogs, you.

But advice from women has sucked, too. No, I do not want to rigidly monitor every bite of food that goes into my mouth, drop myself down to a pathetically unhealthy weight, and try to pretend I'm twenty again. I've been twenty. I was an idiot, but I got over it, and I like me a hell of a lot better now.

Even if, lately, I do have a raging urge to flame internet idiots. I have – so far – restrained myself by walking away when thousand-word essays were clinging to my ankles, begging me to write them. So far, I have managed to chain the club-a-baby-seal rage. So far. But help would be ... helpful.

So.

From a vast wasteland of books by pill-pushing morons and you-can-pretend-you're-twenty-again cheerleaders, I have gleaned the following scraps of genuinely useful advice.

*Black cohosh helps

*Salmon concentrate capsules help

*Flaxseed oil helps

*Natural progesterone helps

If you're also having fun with this new and exciting game, and you've found any books that you can recommend that are NOT written by idiots or drug dealers, please recommend them below.