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Is It Menopause OR IS IT ME?

Seeing Red? Why Perimenopause Might Be to Blame for Your Sudden Anger Issues

What to do when hormonal shifts have you Hulking out.

By Lisa Arbetter Published: Aug 06, 2025 12:45 PM EDT

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Sure, we know that menopause is behind night sweats and hot flashes, but is it to blame for everything that goes awry when you're over a certain age? In this new series, we're unpacking some of the funkiest health woes people encounter in midlife to see which can be chalked up to The Change, and which are...well, just a you thing.

You don't know rage until you've felt perimenopausal rage.

We're talking red mist. Full-body possession. A sudden, uncontrollable surge that makes you want to drop-kick a decorative bowl across Crate & Barrel because someone had the audacity to brush against you.

This Hulk-like behavior has a biological explanation—but hormones alone don't tell the whole story, says psychiatrist **Pooja Lakshmin, MD**, author of *Real Self-Care*. “There's so much going on at this stage in life—hormonally, neurologically, socially. It's a soup.” And many of us are at a boiling point.

Why You're Suddenly Seeing Red

Hormonal chaos is definitely one key piece of the midlife rage puzzle. In perimenopause, your sex hormones spike, crash, and ricochet like the smallest child in a bounce house. Estrogen fluctuations disrupt serotonin and norepinephrine, both of them mood regulators, leaving you without an emotional buffer. Meanwhile, the drop in progesterone messes with the neurotransmitter GABA, your brain's natural calming system.

The result: miserable, intense anger directed at loved ones, strangers, coworkers, twisted coat hangers, unwashed dishes, randos telling you to “calm down,” that ditzy coworker with the extreme vocal fry, you name it.

Is This Really All There Is?

Around the same time your brain chemistry is short-circuiting, you may also be deep into a midlife reckoning—the soup's other main ingredient. Maybe your kids need you less. Or your job feels stalled. Or a once-steady relationship has hit the skids.

“There's this feeling of being lost,” says Lakshmin. “Like, *I did everything I was supposed to do—I was a good mom, a good worker, a good wife. And now what?*”

That disorientation can spark real reflection. Some women make major life changes: a divorce, a new career. Others find a quiet freedom in letting go of who they thought they were supposed to be.

“The gaze isn't on you the way it was in your 20s or 30s,” Lakshmin says. “You don't have to perform anymore. There's this growing sense of: *I know what's best for me. I no longer trust that someone else does.*”

Body First, Then Life

Before you can start interrogating your life choices, you'll need to curb the urge to punch everyone in the face.

Lakshmin recommends considering medical support such as **menopausal hormone therapy** (MHT) or selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) to help get your body back to solid ground. “Once your biology is regulated,” she says, “you can start to do the deeper emotional work of figuring out: *What's next?*” Therapy with a licensed mental health professional can also help you learn healthy coping mechanisms to better process your feelings.

The good news: Even without medical intervention, your hormones will eventually stabilize. According to a 2025 study published in the journal *Menopause*, while **anger often spikes in early perimenopause**, it tends to fade as you get closer to menopause and emotional regulation improves.

In other words, the Hulk inside you will eventually subside, leaving you room to tackle your “why” with the calm precision of Bruce Banner...ideally, without all the ripped shirts.

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