

DON'T TELL ME I CAN'T...

...enter a beauty pageant at 48

Lorna Ive reminds us that hitting the menopause doesn't mean 'the end'

Strutting down the runway in my floor-length evening gown, I stand up straight and smile. I feel confident, elegant, and feminine – three things I haven't felt in years, and promise myself to remember this moment forever. Because even though I hit the menopause in my early 40s, my life is far from over.

When I first got my periods, aged 13, they seemed relatively 'normal'. I finished school at 16 and took a job in London, working in finance. But in my late teens, my periods started lasting weeks and becoming increasingly heavier. My GP assured me they'd go back to normal once I'd had kids.

But by 1997, after my husband, Daniel, then 26, and I had welcomed two daughters, my periods remained chaotic. After having our first son in 2001, doctors advised me to get a hysterectomy to stop the almost constant bleeding, but I was only 30, so refused. Good job, because in 2005 our second son arrived, but over the next few years I suffered various ailments. Nausea, blinding stomach pains, even flaring temperatures – and though all were treatable individually, I wondered if they were signs of something serious.

In September 2013, my new GP suggested it was early menopause. 'No way. I'm too young,' I scoffed, but he told me it wasn't unheard of, and suddenly my symptoms made sense.

At first, I was relieved to get a diagnosis, but for the next few months, I was grieving. My confidence plummeted as I no longer felt feminine, and I didn't



After going through early menopause, Lorna took to the runway

feel like I had a place or purpose any more. Plus, friends didn't understand because they weren't yet going through it, and while my husband was sympathetic, there was little he could say to make me feel better. I'd never felt so alone.

But that's what pushed me to create my business PeriMenoPost in January 2019. I wanted it to be a platform for women to help them understand the menopause better and realise we're all in this together. I got invited to different events to promote my platform, and during one, a former finalist of the Ms Great Britain pageant was encouraging other women to sign up.

On a whim, I decided to put my name forward, thinking at the very least it'd be a great chance to promote my business.

To my surprise, I was selected to compete, and spent the next two months dedicated to pageant prep. I went to dress fittings, perfected my runway walk, and shared my story.

It was all so new and exciting, but when I walked into the Athena Theatre in Leicester in February, the nerves hit. I was 48, most of the other girls were at least 20 years younger, so I was sure I'd stick out. But the moment I stepped on that runway, any worries slipped away.

'IT MADE ME APPRECIATE MY LIFE'



My swimsuit showed my curves, the dress was elegant and sexy, and I loved having my hair and make-up done – I felt more glamorous than I had in years.

I didn't win, but I was grateful to be a finalist because it made me appreciate the life I had left to live. Yes, I'd started the menopause earlier than most, but that didn't mean I was any less of a woman.

Now my company has won a small business award thanks to *Dragons' Den's* Theo Paphitis, and as for my pageant days, they're far from over. I've already signed up for the 2021 contest.

For now, though, I'm loving feeling myself again – and for any woman going through the menopause or those who have already passed it, heed my words – life is only just beginning.

*** For more, visit perimenopost.com**



Yes, you can BUT REMEMBER...

- * If you think you're menopausal, or experiencing strange symptoms, consult a GP.**
- * Research what you have to do to be considered for a pageant – it might mean sponsorship or charity work.**
- * Unsure where to start? Visit missgreatbritain.co.uk for advice, tips and information.**