SESSION TRANSCRIPT · THE MISSING PIECES OF PERIMENOPAUSE

Why You're Snapping at Everyone: The Blood Sugar Piece of Perimenopause Mood

with Nadia Quraishi · Day 4 · Thursday, October 29 · The Unfamiliar Feelings

Hi there, I'm Nadia Quraishi, and I'm a holistic nutritionist. Thank you so much for being here, and thank you to Tracey for having me at The Missing Pieces of Perimenopause.

Today we're talking about something I hear about all the time from women over 40: feeling snappy, irritable, or just completely drained by the middle of the afternoon. I want to show you how much of that can come back to your blood sugar and what's on your plate. By the end of this session, you'll have one simple plate formula and three small food shifts you can try at your very next meal.

Let me start with something I hear all the time from the women I work with: "It's 4pm, and I am just snapping at everyone I love." Maybe you hit a wall right after lunch. Maybe you're short with your kids or your partner by dinnertime, and then you feel guilty about it. Or maybe you find yourself craving something sweet about an hour after you eat. If any of that sounds familiar, you are definitely not alone. A lot of the time there's something very physical going on, and it starts with your blood sugar.

If we haven't met yet, I'm Nadia. I'm a holistic nutritionist, and I help women over 40 get their energy back, steady their mood, and feel strong in their bodies with plant-based eating and simple daily habits. I've worked with hundreds of women over the years, and these days I also teach in-person workshops on hormones and nutrition.

This topic is personal for me too. At 39, I was diagnosed with cancer, and food, sleep, stress, and how I move every day became the foundation of how I take care of myself. Then I went into my 40s, and my body started changing too. I've lived a lot of what we're going to talk about today.

So let's talk about what's actually going on. Somewhere in your late 30s or 40s, you enter perimenopause. Most women think it's a late-40s or 50s thing, but it can actually start up to ten years before menopause. During that time, your estrogen and progesterone stop following the steady rhythm they had in your 20s. They start to swing up and down, and those swings affect a lot more than your cycle. They affect your sleep, your mood, and something most of us never connect to any of this: your blood sugar.

Here's the piece most of us were never told. Falling estrogen affects how your body responds to insulin, the hormone that moves sugar out of your blood and into your cells. So during perimenopause, the same lunch you've eaten for years can send your blood sugar higher than it used to, and then drop it lower.

Look at this picture. The darker line is a meal that's mostly fast carbs, without much fiber or protein. Your blood sugar spikes, and then it crashes below where it started. That crash is when you feel tired, snappy, and suddenly hungry again. The dotted line is a meal with fiber, protein, and plants. It rises gently and settles. Same body, very different afternoon.

So why does this matter for your mood? When your blood sugar drops quickly, your body treats it like a small emergency. It releases stress hormones to bring your blood sugar back up, and that can feel a lot like anxiety or irritability. Your heart might race a little, your patience gets short, and suddenly the smallest thing feels like too much. That's often the snapping at everyone. It's also the 3 or 4pm wall, the brain fog, needing a nap. And it's the craving for something sweet about an hour after you eat, because your body is asking for quick energy.

The good news is that a lot of this is something you can influence with how you build your plate. That's what the rest of this session is about.

There are three everyday habits I see over and over that make these swings bigger. The first is skipping breakfast, or running on coffee until lunch. For a lot of the women I work with, going a long time on very little sets up a bigger drop later in the day.

The second is eating carbs on their own: toast by itself, a handful of crackers, a piece of fruit on its own. There's nothing wrong with these foods. They just hit your blood sugar faster when they're alone.

And the third is plates that are light on fiber and protein, which are the two things that slow everything down.

So let me show you the simple plate I teach my clients to fix all three. This is what I call the Steady Mood Plate. I also call it the half-plate method. Half your plate is veggies and greens. A quarter is protein. A quarter is slow carbs, like sweet potato, potatoes, quinoa, or brown rice. And then a little healthy fat.

I want you to notice something. This is a big, full plate. There is nothing tiny or restrictive about it. You're just building it in a way that keeps your blood sugar steady, so your energy and your mood stay steadier too.

Each part of this plate has a job. The veggie half is your fiber. Fiber slows down how fast sugar reaches your blood, so you get that gentle rise instead of the spike. Leafy greens, broccoli, peppers, zucchini, cabbage, a big salad. These are the things that are going to soften the spike.

The protein quarter keeps you full and keeps your energy even for hours. I lean on plant proteins like lentils, beans, chickpeas, tofu, tempeh, and edamame.

The slow-carb quarter is steady fuel. Your brain runs on carbs, so please don't be afraid of a sweet potato or a potato. The key is the slow kind, with fiber, in the right amount.

And then a little healthy fat, about a thumb's worth: avocado, olive oil, nuts, seeds, or tahini. It helps you feel satisfied, so you're not hunting for a snack an hour later.

Here's what that looks like in real life. This is an actual dinner from my own kitchen. Half the plate is greens and red cabbage. A quarter is a veggie stir-fry with seitan, which is a really high-protein plant food. And a quarter is wild rice with a purple sweet potato. It's big, it's colorful, and it's filling. And an hour later, I'm not tired, I'm not cranky, and I'm not looking for something sweet. That's the whole point of what I'm teaching today.

Now for the three small shifts. These are the easiest places to start.

Shift number one: start the day with protein. A breakfast with about 20 to 30 grams of protein sets you up for steadier energy all day long. It's one of the biggest changes I see with the women I work with, and it doesn't have to be complicated or take a long time to make. Try oats made with soy milk and a spoonful of hemp seeds, or a tofu scramble with some veggies. If you're allergic to soy, try oats with milk, hemp seeds, and a little nut butter. And if you're someone who isn't hungry in the morning, just start small. Even a smoothie with some plant protein counts.

Shift number two: give every carb a partner. Remember how carbs on their own hit your blood sugar faster? The fix is simple. Pair them with a little protein or fat. Instead of an apple on its own, have an apple with a spoonful of nut butter. Instead of plain crackers, have crackers with hummus. Toast with avocado or nut butter. This one is perfect for that 3pm snack, which is exactly when a lot of us start to crash. You still get to enjoy the foods you love. You're just giving them a partner.

Shift number three: eat your veggies first. Start your meal with the veggie half of your plate. When you eat vegetables before your carbs, the fiber gets there first, and your blood sugar rises more gently. You're eating the exact same food. You're just changing the order. A side salad before dinner, or a few bites of your greens before anything else on the plate. It's such a

small thing, and it's one of my favorites, because it doesn't ask you to change what you eat at all.

So here is your one small challenge. Try the Steady Mood Plate at your very next lunch: half veggies and greens, a quarter protein (preferably plant protein), a quarter slow carbs, and a little healthy fat. And if you can, add one of the three shifts: protein at breakfast, a partner for your carbs, or veggies first. Then just notice how you feel at 4pm. Your energy, your patience, your cravings.

You don't have to change everything at once. One plate, one shift, and see what happens. Progress over perfection.

And this is just one piece of the picture. Sleep, stress, and movement all play a part too, and you'll hear so much about those from the other amazing speakers at this summit.

To make this really easy, I put everything from today on one page for you. It's called the Steady Mood Plate. It has the plate formula and the three shifts, all on one page. Print it out, put it on your fridge, and use it the next time you're making lunch. It's my free gift to you as part of this summit. Go to go.nourishedbynadia.com/steady-mood-plate and use the code NOTRICKS26, and it's completely free. You'll find the link on my session page too.

Thank you so much for spending this time with me. I hope you try the Steady Mood Plate this week, and I'd love to hear how you feel at 4pm. You can find me at nourishedbynadia.com, or on Instagram at Nourished by Nadia.

And a quick reminder: everything I shared today is education, not medical advice. If you take medication for blood sugar, please check with your doctor before changing how you eat. Enjoy the rest of the summit, and remember, progress over perfection.