



I DON'T FEEL
BAD THAT
MY SKIN IS
NOT AS
SMOOTH AS IT
USED TO BE

Don't tell me I can't...

...sunbathe topless

When the sun's out, is there any better feeling than going au naturel and taking your top off?

Helen O'Donnell, 44, from Huddersfield works in a clothes shop. She's divorced and has two children, Amber, 20, and Mikey, 17.

I have always felt quite comfortable sunbathing topless, wearing just bikini bottoms. I don't walk about topless, but when I am sunbathing on the beach or by a swimming pool it feels perfectly natural to slip off my bikini top as I lie down. My children are quite used to it, and don't bat an eyelid when they see me without my bikini top and always tell me I look great.

It makes me angry when I hear women say, 'Oh, I'm 40, I couldn't possibly be so outrageous.' Why not? The world is changing. Who's to say older women can't wear bikinis or go topless?

In just the same way, I don't see anything wrong in a woman of 55 wearing a

mini-skirt, as long as she has the legs for it. The old rules have gone now, and we can do what we like. I feel that I have gained more confidence since I was divorced.

This summer I'm taking the children to Ibiza. They'll go clubbing while I settle down with a good book. But during the day I'll be lying by the pool or on the beach wearing a bikini - without the top.

Body confidence is very important as you get older. I work hard to stay in shape; at 44 and 5ft 8in, I'm a size 10 to 12 and weigh around 10st.

When I got to 40 I found that I was beginning to thicken around the middle and get that dreadful 'muffin top' look. So I started going to the gym more often and cut down on what I was eating. I also do a lot of walking - our nearest village is seven miles away - and I walk to and from the shops in the village at least

a couple of times a week.

Once women reach 40, they're often deemed 'too old' for a bikini, or to go topless. So hurrah for Helen Mirren who was photographed looking stunning in her bikini, and she's in her 60s! Admittedly, my boobs aren't what they were - I have breast-fed two children, after all - but exercise tones the muscles.

I'm happy being topless while I'm lying down, but when I get up I put on a top, because I need the uplift and realise it's not an attractive look! I usually pop a short dress over my bikini.

I never compare myself to younger women. Of course, when I'm on the beach I'm aware that there are more beautiful women around. But I am me, I have the experience of my years and I'm not going to feel bad just because my skin isn't quite as smooth as it used to be.



Helen - bikini top firmly on - with daughter Amber

Yes you can BUT BE SURE TO...

- ★ Always use sunblock - your skin is very delicate around the décolletage area.
- ★ Be sensitive when going topless - respect the local customs and culture, especially when you're abroad. If in doubt, don't bare.
- ★ Cover up when you're walking on the beach or by the pool.
- ★ Check when you're with friends that they are comfortable for you to be topless.

Don't tell me I can't...

★ Do you refuse to be pigeonholed? We want to hear from you - email donttellemeican@ipcmedia.com