

CELEBRATION OF WELLNESS

NEWS

Issue 13

February 2019

Addressing The Female Libido

Jennifer R. Vande Velde, DO, FACOG - Ladies, is your sex drive stalled out? Or is it in hyperdrive? Studies show that a significant amount of women have a lower level of libido than what they desire. Movies, TV shows, and social media portray energetic, powerful, and beautiful



women having amazing sexual energy. But let's face it, like anything else on the big screen or Instagram, things are often exaggerated or untrue. Before you get too overwhelmed, let's learn a little about what is going on.

Sexual problems are very common in women of all ages. Up to 40

percent of women report concerns to their doctors and therapists. This percentage is likely even higher due to underreporting due to embarrassment and a lack of social acceptance. The clinical term for these sexual problems is "female sexual dysfunction". In this article, I will discuss some clinical observations, explanations, and treatments for a low female libido.

We must understand the different types of problems that exist in order to identify them in ourselves. Some sexual problems include lack of sexual desire, impaired arousal, inability to achieve orgasm, and pain with sexual activity. There may also be a combination of problems happening at the same time. Once we have identified the problem, we must set realistic goals for treatment. A good goal might be to return to a baseline level of desire that was present at an earlier time in life.

After determining the cause of the disorder with your health care provider, treatment options can be initiated. These usually take a multidisciplinary and multimodal approach that can include counseling (couples or individual) or a combination of psychotherapy and pharmacology. Lifestyle changes are encouraged first for problems related to low sexual desire. Fatigue, stress, and lack of privacy can play a large role. Reducing stress at work and home is easier said than done but can truly be a game changer. Delegating household chores, exercising to improve body image, and engaging in relaxation techniques are a good start. Studies also show that reading books about sexual desires, visiting "specialty stores", and expanding your usual sexual repertoire can effectively increase libido and response.

If your decreased sexual desire is due to pain, pelvic floor physical therapy may be an excellent option after pathological conditions such as ovarian cysts, endometriosis, bladder, and bowel problems are ruled out by your doctor. Vaginal conditions such as vaginismus are rare but

treatable through your gynecologist.

Understanding sexual interest and arousal problems can be confusing for a woman and her health care provider. It has been found that sexual interest typically decreases with relationship duration. Here are some hints on how to improve things:

- Spend a night away from home together. Date nights often improve sexual satisfaction. It has been shown that couples who enjoy time together outside the bedroom often have more fun in the bedroom.
- Try new positions.
- Incorporate devices or "warming lubricants."
- Try an unusual time of the day to be intimate.

In my practice, I often get questions about checking hormone levels and treatment with testosterone supplements. What I tell my patients is that testosterone and estrogen levels in your body do not and cannot predict sexual function. Studies have shown that increasing levels of testosterone may increase desire in postmenopausal woman, but this is not advised. Some side effects include facial hair growth, deepening of the voice, acne, male pattern baldness, abnormal uterine bleeding, and breast cancer. Research shows that it increased the frequency of desire by 1.9% compared to the placebo. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not approve androgen use for sexual dysfunction. Other drugs include synthetic steroids, serotonergic, and dopaminergic agents such as fibaserin, bupropion, and buspiron.

To find out more about treatment for low libido, call your gynecologist or family doctor and have a complete physical.

Valentine's Day

This Valentine's Day, millions of Americans will purchase chocolates and flowers for their loved ones. Here are some fun facts about this special day:



- Passing out Valentines is a 600-year-old tradition.
- Valentine's Day started with the Romans.
- Candy hearts were originally medical lozenges.
- Americans spend a lot on love. (\$19.6 Billion spent in 2018!!)
- The chocolate box has been around for more than 140 years.



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410 Celebration Place, Suite 208,
Celebration, FL 34747

407-566-BABY (2229)

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