

Guest Columnist

Author: Dr. Liz Lyster - Holtorf Medical Group Last Updated: Nov 29, 2012 - 7:11:02 AM

Raising Libido, Naturally

By Dr. Liz Lyster - Holtorf Medical Group
Sep 9, 2011 - 1:29:54 PM



(HealthNewsDigest.com) - Libido doesn't just refer to sex. Libido is life-energy, motivation, a feeling of well-being. When hormones levels fall and life stresses increase, interest in sex can be the first thing to go. While that might make sense in evolution (the younger, stronger people should be the ones who have sex and make babies), with our lifespan extending decades longer than before, people want their healthy sex life to last much longer.

As we get older, our bodies change. For women, menopause brings a rapid major drop in hormone levels. Symptoms are usually noticeable, such as hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness and the menstrual period stopping. For men, the decline in their hormone levels is more gradual, and symptoms may be obvious, such as erectile dysfunction, or more subtle, including irritable mood and lack of motivation. For both men and women, sleep disruption and lack of interest in sex can accompany declining hormone levels.

Along with wanting to have healthy sex lives, people nowadays want to find natural ways to feel better. While drugs like Viagra may help symptoms of sexual dysfunction, such as erectile dysfunction (and might help women's sexual function - this is controversial), they don't address the underlying root causes of sexual dysfunction and lack of libido. Here are some approaches that get to the underlying source of the problems people experience with sexual performance and enjoyment.

There are three major areas of natural therapy that can help libido - lifestyle factors, hormone therapy, and nutritional supplements. Lifestyle factors include life and work stress, obesity, and lack of sleep; addressing these is essential to achieving optimal health. Hormone therapy can be extremely helpful in the form of bioidentical hormones (ones that are the same in structure to what the human body produces), either in over-the-counter preparations or by prescription. Nutritional supplements use various herbs and nutrients that have been used for centuries to help sexual function. Let's look at each of these areas in more detail.

It's not just a good idea to address "lifestyle" factors in health and wellness - it is essential. Disrupted sleep often occurs both from hormonal changes, such as menopause, and stressful conditions, including work, family, and illness. Obesity goes hand in hand with hormonal imbalance, and our health care system should be doing more to help people reach and maintain a healthy weight. In men, excess fat can produce estrogen, which opposes testosterone and lowers their sexual function. In women, excess weight changes their self-image, which is often a factor in women's sex lives. Anything that lowers stress - including exercise, meditation, social activities - is helpful to achieve the best frame of mind for satisfying sex.

Just the words "hormone therapy" can stir up fears of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Although a full discussion of this topic is outside the scope of this article, let me say that extensive scientific data exists to support the safety and effectiveness of bioidentical hormones to increase levels of hormones, including estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and DHEA. Several types of cancer may even be lowered with the use of hormone therapy. For estrogen replacement in women, many large studies show that using transdermal (through the skin) forms of estrogen gives the benefits (improving mood, clearing up hot flashes, night sweats and vaginal dryness) without

increasing cardiovascular risks such as heart attack and stroke. (These risks do up with oral forms of estrogen.) Other natural hormones can help specifically with sexual function, such as oxytocin (the “bonding hormone”) – this is not yet available pharmaceutically and must be compounded, usually in the form of a nasal spray.

The internet abounds with nutritional supplements promising improvement in sexual function. Although our pharmaceutical industry-based system of medical research does not prove the effectiveness of dietary supplements in the same way as most prescription medications, there does in fact exist an extensive amount of scientific information supporting the claims of supplement manufacturers. L-arginine, ginkgo biloba and niacin are examples of nutrients that have been shown to improve blood flow and erectile function. Herbal remedies such as black cohosh, maca root, and chaste berry can help relieve menopausal symptoms and improve sexual response in women. These are just a few examples among many herbal, homeopathic and nutritional ways to support optimal sexual function.

Occasional loss of libido can go along with the usual events and stresses of life, but anyone finding themselves with less sex drive than what is normal for them can seek out many different ways to improve their situation. Areas that have to be addressed include so-called “lifestyle” factors, hormonal imbalances (that can be corrected with natural bioidentical hormones), and nutritional deficiencies. Overweight and obesity, lack of sleep, and stress-management have to be handled. Menopause and “andropause” (the common decrease in testosterone levels in men that occurs with age) symptoms can be easily improved with safe and effective hormonal therapies. Nutritional supplements can give our cells the basic ingredients they need for optimal function. These are basic essentials for long-lasting healthy and satisfying sex lives.

Elizabeth Lyster M.D.

Holtorf Medical Group

Elizabeth Lyster, M.D. is board certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology with over 20 years of clinical experience dealing with conditions such as complex hormonal imbalances, metabolic conditions causing weight issues, thyroid dysfunctions, adrenal dysfunction, and fatigue disorders. She has special expertise in the treatment of perimenopause and menopause with the use of bioidentical hormones and in 2009, she published her first book, “Dr. Liz’s Easy Guide to Menopause: 5 Simple Steps to Balancing Your Hormones and Feeling like Yourself Again”. She has extensive knowledge and experience in treating patients with multi-system dysfunctions and achieving balance, both in their body and lives.

Dr. Lyster completed her undergraduate studies at Cornell University (graduating with honors), and earned her medical degree from the University of California at Irvine. She also holds a Masters of Public Health degree in Health Education obtained from UCLA. She gives lectures to community groups and doctors, writes articles turning complex medical topics into understandable language, and enjoys frequent media appearances. Her hobbies include travel, fitness training, arts and crafts, and chasing her two active sons. She is fluent in Spanish.
