

# What to Do About Lowered Libido

By Dr. Jenn Berman

A recent study in *Obstetrics and Gynecology Magazine* found that one in ten women between the ages of eighteen and forty-four, reported experiencing a low libido. If your libido is low, make sure to rule out the physical before assuming that low desire is an emotional issue and work with your doctor to get to the root of the problem. Make sure to get more than one opinion and don't let your doctor blow you off.

## Medication

Many women are surprised to learn that medications they may be taking to help their sex life may actually be hurting it. Two common culprits are birth control pills and antidepressants. The birth control pill affects sex drive because it acts directly on a woman's sexual hormones. It inhibits the production of hormones called androgens (including testosterone) which can have a direct effect on the pleasure experienced. Women should not have to choose between birth control and libido. Work with your doctor to find the right birth control pill for your body. Just because one pill affects libido or has side effects doesn't mean another one will. Also, there are many other methods of birth control.

If you think your antidepressants may be killing your sex drive, do not stop taking them without discussing it with your doctor first. Besides the fact that suddenly discontinuing medication could be dangerous, a depressed person who goes off her antidepressants is likely to be too depressed to have a sex drive, anyway. Work with your doctor to find an antidepressant that has as few side effects for your body as possible. Ask about non-traditional options like acupuncture and homeopathic medication which can

help diminish side effects when used in conjunction with medication.

## Lifestyle

When it comes to libido, stress is a huge factor. With a difficult economy everyone is under more stress, there is less time to take good care of ourselves, and there is more relationship conflict, all of which can lead to depression. Lowered libido is a classic symptom of depression.

It is also important to make healthy lifestyle choices. If you smoke, stop. If you are a regular drinker, limit or abstain from alcohol. While a stiff drink can lower your inhibitions, alcohol is a depressant that can harm your sex drive. Make sure to get enough sleep and do your best to eat nutritious foods.

Make sure to address any mental health issues that may be contributing factors for you, since issues around eating disorders, body image, depression or anxiety can also be big libido squashes. Find a therapist you feel comfortable working with so that you can resolve these issues.

## Relationship

For most women, sexual desire is multi-dimensional. It has often been said that men need to have sex to feel loved and women need to feel loved to have sex. Emotional closeness can be particularly important for women. It is particularly important to work through resentments, practice good communication and take the time to connect. All too often we miss out on connected time together because we are watching TV, glued to our laptops or talking or texting on our cell phones. In addition, keep in mind that women are particularly sensitive to environment and context. In other words, while he

may be game to do it on a pile of dirty laundry, she is more likely to be too distracted by the unfinished chore to get down and dirty.

When all else fails, it pays to remember the old Nike commercial and "just do it." Sometimes pushing yourself to get started can fan the flames of desire and get you interested again.

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