



Feeling Frisky! Increase your Libido.... Naturally!

Low libido, or low sex drive, is a common complaint I hear from many of my patients, both men and women. A low libido can be caused by several different factors including stress, hormone imbalances, certain medications (like antidepressants), and an unhealthy lifestyle (poor diet, lack of exercise, being overweight, etc).

To increase your libido, I recommend starting with the basics. This includes a healthy diet free of processed foods and sugars. Exercise daily to reduce stress levels and increase endorphins naturally in your body. Practice stress management on a daily basis including yoga, meditation and deep breathing exercises.

Plan some quality time with your partner on a daily basis. Add some romance into your life. Even a romantic dinner once a week can rekindle the spark that can sometimes get lost in a fast paced world. Make time for each other.

Chocolate and Oysters... a natural aphrodisiac?

What you eat during the day can affect how you perform at night. There are many foods that are known to increase libido. Two well known aphrodisiacs (and my favorites) include chocolate and oysters.

Oysters are high in zinc, which is known to raise testosterone levels and sperm production in men. Oysters also boost dopamine, a hormone which results in increased libido in both men and women.

Dark chocolate contains phenylalanine, an amino acid that boosts arousal and mimics brain chemistry of a person in love. It also increases serotonin which boosts your mood. A 2006 study in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* found that women who ate chocolate on a daily basis had higher sexual function than those who didn't.

The information provided is not intended to diagnose or treat any health condition. Please consult with your doctor or naturopathic doctor before starting any new supplement program as they may have interactions with certain medications. Many of these herbs increase circulation. You have to be cautious if you are taking certain medications that also affect blood flow such as blood thinners, heart medications or blood pressure medications.



The Importance of Vitamins and Herbs:

1. Zinc is an important nutrient to increase libido. A deficiency of zinc can contribute to a low libido, low sperm count, irregular periods for women... In some cases a deficiency of zinc can make a woman completely lose her sex drive. Eat foods high in zinc such as beans and legumes, Brazil nuts, brown rice, cashews, peanuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, wheat germ, and oysters. If you would like to take a supplement, I suggest 50mg of zinc citrate per day.

2. Ginkgo Biloba has received a lot of attention lately due its ability to increase blood flow to the organs. Its use for sexual function was first investigated after an older man who was taking the herb to improve memory reported a dramatic improvement in sexual function. Since then numerous studies show its benefit in increasing both female and male libido. A study with 63 participants found Ginkgo Biloba extract to be effective in 84% of patients with antidepressant-related sexual dysfunction. In the study, all areas of sexual libido saw improvement, including desire, excitement, and orgasm.

3. L- Arginine is an amino acid that is very popular for the treatment of sexual dysfunction. Arginine will relax blood vessels and allow more blood to flow through arteries and to the organs. L-Arginine is excellent for men to get and maintain an erection.

In a clinical study 77 women with decreased libido were given either a combination product or placebo. Women taking L- Arginine showed greater improvement such as increased reported sexual desire in 71% compared to 42%. They also reported other improvements such as they were happier with their sex lives, and improved the frequency of orgasms.

4. Korean Ginseng is one of my favorite herbs. It is known to possess phytoestrogen activity and is believed to help the body adapt to stress, which helps female and male libido. It is particularly good for people with low libido due to stress.

5. Tribulus increases Testosterone in the body. Studies show Tribulus increases Testosterone in the body by 40%. This in turn increase libido in both men and women. In men, Tribulus also increases sperm count and sperm mobility. The recommended dosage is 625mg twice a day.

6. Damiana. The leaf of this herb has been used for centuries in Mexico to treat sexual dysfunction and low sex drive. Dosage is 400 mg once or twice a day.



7. Horny Goat Weed has been used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine to increase sex drive. It increases blood flow in the body, letting more blood flow to the penis and clitoris. It has also been found to support the neurotransmitter in the brain to stimulate sexual arousal. Do not take Horny Goat Weed if you are on heart or blood pressure medications, or if you Type 1 Diabetes.

8. Maca, also known as Peruvian Ginseng has been used traditionally to increase libido and sexual stamina. In one 4 month study, treatment with Maca resulted in increased seminal volume, sperm count and motility in men.

Another 12 week randomized controlled trial looked at Maca use in men compared to placebo. After 8 weeks, there was an improvement in sexual desire in the men taking maca

Hormones and Your Libido: The key players in maintaining your libido as you age:

1. Testosterone is very important for your sex drive (for both men and women). As you age, your testosterone levels decline. For men, this is a 1.5 % decline per year after the age of 30. The effects of low testosterone include decreased muscle mass and bone density, insulin resistance, decreased sex drive, less energy, irritability and feeling of depression. A simple test can indicate low testosterone levels in both men and women. Supplementing with Testosterone can improve sexual function. The Naturopathic Doctors at Vitalia Health Care can administer these tests and provide Testosterone therapy if indicated. (When we talk about Testosterone, we mostly think about men, but women's libido needs Testosterone too!!!)

2. Estrogen and Progesterone. As the levels of these 2 hormones decline in women, sex drive can also decline. Testosterone is the precursor to Estrogen. If Testosterone levels are low, Estrogen levels can be low and a woman may lose her sex drive. If the low libido is also accompanied with vaginal dryness, menstrual irregularities, PMS, etc., I highly suggest having your hormones tested. The Naturopathic Doctors at Vitalia Health Care can discuss your current hormone health and make appropriate recommendations.

Any person contemplating taking hormone replacement should work closely with a qualified physician for continued monitoring and screening. The doctors at Vitalia Health Care are qualified in the prescribing and monitoring for hormone replacement therapy.

3. DHEA. This is the considered the "mother" hormone. It is the precursor to Testosterone. Stress and aging are the 2 main reasons DHEA declines. Low DHEA can lead to low sex drive.



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4. Cortisol. This is our stress hormone. High or low Cortisol can lead to problems with sex drive. Other symptoms of Cortisol imbalance include low energy, chronic stress, muscle pain, poor memory, and hypoglycemia. Balancing your stress hormones can result in dramatic improvements in all of these symptoms, including libido. Our Naturopathic Doctors are highly trained in treating Cortisol imbalances.

Drugs: Could they be the culprit?

Many pharmaceutical medications have side effects, a common one being eliminating your sex drive. Antidepressants and birth control pills are big culprits. They can suppress hormone production and lead to low libido. Talk to your doctor if you suspect the medications you are using are affecting your sex drive.

As you can see, a loss or decline in sex drive can have many different causes. The Naturopathic Doctors at Vitalia Health Care can investigate the underlying causes of a low libido and develop an effective treatment program for you. Call us today at 604-732-3422 to book your appointment. Start feeling frisky again!!