

## Sexual Health

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As Marilyn Monroe once said, "Sex is a part of nature, and I go along with nature." Though, according to Psychology Today, sexual behavior is not necessarily natural; sex within itself is considered a learned behavior. The act alone evolves as a result of whatever sex education a person has acquired. According to Diane Gleim, LMFT, CST, CST-S, "The sexual drive may be innate, but sexual information, sexual ethics and sexual behavior is learned."

So, why have I utilized a quote in relation to sex attributed to Marilyn Monroe? Simply, I thought it was an interesting lead in discussing the natural facets of sexual health; nonetheless, a topic which can be an uncomfortable conversation, for many.

From a clinical standpoint, sexual health is a crucial part of our physical, emotional, and mental well-being. The balance of hormones, the physical state of our bodies, and the clarity of our minds collectively support our sexual health. Though in contrast, it is important to be educated on how the impact of a poor diet, lack of exercise, sleep deprivation, stress, environmental factors, toxins, and hormonal imbalances can negatively impact our sexual health.

First, it is crucial to maintain a healthy lifestyle to support sexual function. Eating healthy foods and fueling your body with the nutrients it needs will improve your overall well-being. It is also important to exercise regularly. Aerobic exercises increase blood flow to the genitals, which can, in turn, increase libido for women and improve erectile function for men. Cardio exercise also helps reduce stress and anxiety, both of which are major libido killers.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), obesity and inactivity have led to an increasing number of individuals with sexual dysfunctions (43% of women; 31% of men). Based on research, even insignificant amounts of exercise can drastically improve sexual functioning.

Second, stress can easily be a libido killer. Whether it be difficult family matters, work deadlines or bills, your body undergoes a series of changes when stressed. Commonly known as 'fight or flight' responses, stress can increase your heart and breathing rate, blood pressure, and decrease non-essential bodily functions, like your sex drive.

According to VeryWellMind.com, stress management techniques can include:

- *Aromatherapy*, to promote a sense of relaxation.
- *Meditation* can have a wide range of physical and mental benefits including stress reduction.
- *Guided Imagery*, which is a relaxation technique using your imagination to help lower stress, pain, or other negative feelings. The most basic technique is to close your eyes and imagine being in a place that is relaxing.
- *Journaling*, to express your thoughts and feelings. This has proven benefits in managing stress and coping with mental health conditions.
- *Progressive muscle relaxation*, which helps reduce muscle tension and general mental anxiety.

Other health related initiatives to focus on are to attain sleep, stay hydrated and obtain the appropriate vitamins, minerals, and varying nutrients. Personally, I like to walk outside to acquire sunlight for a natural source of Vitamin D. I make sure I incorporate foods rich in Vitamin C like strawberries, tomatoes, and red and green peppers. I also integrate Black Cumin Seed (to help reduce inflammation, promote immunity and energy metabolism); Turmeric (to support digestion, arthritis, and allergies); Broccoli (calcium source for strong bones, fiber, and healthy metabolism); Spirulina (to improve cholesterol and triglyceride levels, reduce blood pressure, and lower fasting blood sugar levels); and Cayenne Pepper into my diet.

I take a packet of 'RESTORE' daily, from The ROOT Brands®, to help with inflammation and assist my body's immune system. I also detox daily, with 'Clean Slate,' to support the removal of toxins, heavy metals, and environmental pollutants. It is important to note, heavy metals can affect your circulation and blood flow, hormonal balance, fertility, and oxidative stress, which can also negatively affect your sexual function.

Clearing toxins from the body can help clear the mind, which plays a crucial role in also having, and/or sustaining a healthy sex life. For more information on those specific products, check out [www.therootbrands.com/purelivingroot](http://www.therootbrands.com/purelivingroot).

Regarding hormones, overall sexual motivation is influenced by testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, oxytocin, and vasopressin, among others. Although hormonal levels fluctuate regularly, long-term imbalances can lead to a myriad of symptoms and conditions, which can negatively affect your sexual health. Hormonal imbalances can also be a sign of an underlying health condition, or a side effect of certain medications. For this reason, people who experience recurring symptoms of hormonal imbalances should speak to their primary care physician, or OB/gyn, for hormone testing.

The bottom line is, we are responsible for managing the health of our body's ability to function at optimal levels; whether physical, mental, emotional, psychological, or sexual. Therefore, we should work to sustain as much health and longevity as possible, to live the best life we can for ourselves, our families, and our partners.