



Annandale OBGYN  
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## How to Improve Your Low Sex Drive

Female low sex drive and sexual dysfunction is a common problem in the United States. It is estimated that 12-40% of women may experience low libido, impaired arousal, or difficulty achieving orgasm. There are many different issues, illnesses, medications, among other things that can cause and contribute to low libido. It is important to rule out and/or identify potential contributors before treatment.

### CAUSES

- Pain during sex
- Medical conditions: Cancer, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary artery disease
- Medications: Anti-depressants (SSRIs), oral contraceptive pills
- Mental health: Anxiety, depression, stress, history of sexual abuse or trauma, body dysmorphia, eating disorders
- Hormonal changes: Menopause, pregnancy, breastfeeding
- Relationship: Lack of connection, trust issues, poor communication about sexual needs
- Lifestyle: Fatigue, excessive alcohol use, smoking, illicit drug use, obesity

### HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR LIBIDO?

Although this may sound silly, actually **having intercourse more frequently** can impact hormones enough that it may improve libido. However, you should not force yourself or do something you don't want to do.

If low testosterone is a contributor, there are ways to **increase testosterone naturally**, such as prioritizing exercise (lifting weights), getting adequate sleep, focusing on a healthy well-balanced diet, minimizing stress, getting sunlight and adequate vitamin D, and adding in a multivitamin and zinc supplements.

Even if low testosterone is not specific to you, **getting enough sleep and minimizing stress**, will only have positive effects on your overall mood, well-being and sex drive.

If you feel that your low sex drive may be stemming from **relationship issues**, we suggest addressing these issues with your partner and seeking out couple's counseling. It is important to be able to voice to your partner your wants and needs. If you are in an abusive relationship, either emotionally or physically, please notify a staff member immediately.

### MEDICATIONS

#### **Antidepressants**

- Wellbutrin (Bupropion) is an antidepressant that has been long used to treat sexual dysfunction, as an off-label use. It works by affecting the neurotransmitter balance in the brain
- 1 pill should be taken in the morning
- Side effects include anxiety, insomnia, high blood pressure



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### **Addyi**

- A medication used to treat low sexual desire in premenopausal women
- It is not like Viagra for men, it does not cause you to instantly be aroused, but rather builds up in the body and works over time by affecting the neurotransmitter balance
- 1 pill should be taken nightly before bed
- It takes a few weeks to start seeing positive affects
- Side effects include low blood pressure, dizziness, drowsiness, nausea, dry mouth, trouble sleeping
- It should not be taken within 2 hours of consuming alcohol
- Let your provider know if you are on other medications as it does have interactions, such as Fluconazole/Diflucan

### **Testosterone**

- If you are low in testosterone, supplementing with it has been shown to improve low libido, as well as improve other symptoms of hair loss, fatigue, brain fog, weight gain, and decreased muscle mass
- Topical compounded testosterone creams work well
- A small amount of testosterone cream is applied to the outer upper arm or inner forearm daily and rubbed in until dry. Hands should be washed after. It will not transfer to your partner
- Symptoms should improve within 1 month of daily use
- Side effects are rare but include skin irritation, mood changes, acne, abnormal hair growth
  
- If vaginal dryness is an issue, vaginal testosterone can be used nightly at bedtime instead of topically on the arm

### **"Scream Cream"**

- Topical compounded cream of Sildenafil / Arginine / Theophylline works by increasing blood flow to the vaginal tissues and clitoris to help with arousal and orgasm
- A small amount is massaged into the clitoris 15-30 minutes before intercourse. Hands should be washed after. It will not transfer to your partner.
- Side effects are rare but include irritation, allergic reaction

### **PRP Shot**

- PRP therapy with the "O Shot" can be done in the office with an FDA-approved kit. It works by drawing your blood, which is then spun down to separate the whole blood from the platelet-rich plasma. The "O Shot" is then injected intravaginally. The platelets stimulate growth factors and blood flow to the vaginal tissues and clitoris. The therapy is typically done in three consecutive treatments, 4 weeks apart then every 6-12 months for touch-ups. Side effects include pain, infection and rarely scar tissue build-up. The cost is \$600 per session.



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## PAIN

Why would you be interested in sex if it is painful?!

### **Hormonal Creams**

- If sex is painful due to atrophy (diminished vaginal tissue health due to aging and menopause) there are creams that can help
- Compounded creams that contain a combination of estrogen, testosterone and DHEA have been shown to improve vaginal tissue elasticity, flexibility and the ability to produce lubrication
- This may improve pain with insertion, as well as decrease bleeding

### **Vaginal Lasers**

- In office, we have a radio frequency laser specifically designed for the vagina and its tissues. The laser stimulates collagen production in the tissue, which can improve vaginal tissue health and help improve your body's ability to produce natural lubrication. The probe is placed into the vagina and the laser is performed. The entire procedure takes less than 5 minutes. You should feel no pain, just some warmth. You can resume normal activities immediately afterwards. We recommend 4 sessions 4 weeks apart. You typically start seeing effects in 3-4 weeks. The cost is \$400 per session.
- This can be used for women with atrophy and postpartum women

### **Pelvic Floor Therapy & Vaginal Dilators**

- If the pain is due to a muscular cause, whether it be vaginal or pelvic pain, pelvic floor therapy has been shown to help extraordinarily well
- We partner with physical therapists who specialize in the pelvic floor . The PT will assess you and determine which of your muscles are tight or inflamed and causing you the pain and then teach you exercises and relaxation techniques to help with the discomfort
- Additionally, if your pain is more external due to narrowing of the vaginal opening (typically due to age and menopause), vaginal dilators can help to stretch the opening and decrease pain