



Sexual changes with aging

Sexual health is a part of overall health. Having sex on a regular basis helps maintain sexual function. Sexual health is not just safe sex. It is feeling close or intimate with a partner. There are many ways to do this. Sex is one of them.

PHYSICAL CHANGES

Men:

- It may take longer to get an erection and to ejaculate.
- Erections may not be as hard or as large as in earlier years.
- The feeling that an ejaculation is about to happen may be shorter.
- After an ejaculation, more time needs to pass to get a second erection.
- Some males find they need more manual stimulation.
- The chances for erectile dysfunction (ED) increase.

Women:

- The vagina is drier. The walls of the vagina get thinner and less elastic. These can make sex uncomfortable.
- It may take longer to feel aroused.
- Orgasms can be shorter or less intense than in years past.



CHANGES FROM HEALTH CONDITIONS

Sexual health can be affected by many conditions. These include:

- Certain medicines. Ask your doctor if medicines you take affect your sexual response.
- Alcohol
- Heart attack
- Chronic pain
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- HIV and STIs
- Menopause
- Depression
- Incontinence
- Dementia
- Parkinson's disease
- Cancer and side effects of cancer treatment
- Surgery that involves the sex organs, such as a hysterectomy

EMOTIONAL CHANGES

- As persons age, they may feel more anxious about their appearance or ability to perform. This can interfere with the ability to enjoy sex.
- Not having a partner through choice, divorce, or death may make it difficult to deal with sexual feelings.
- A lack of sexual desire may be due to lower hormone levels or having an illness or a disability.
- After menopause, both men and women may feel less anxious about having sex because they don't have to worry about a pregnancy.
- A couple may have more time and privacy for sex if their children are grown and spend less time at home.





SELF-CARE

- Express your needs. Let your partner express their needs, too. Talk about your fears, fantasies, etc.
- Spend more time on foreplay. Let your partner know where and how you want to be touched.
- Have sex when you are less tired, such as in the morning.
- Take the pressure off your partner. Tell them that you know sex can take longer. Express your need for intimacy, not just performance.
- Avoid or limit alcohol. A little alcohol can help a person relax. Too much can interfere with sex and lead to unsafe sex.
- Avoid illicit or illegal drug use. This can lead to unsafe sex.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any medicines you take can affect your sex life. Find out if another medicine can be used without this side effect.
- Plan time to be alone together and for sex. This promotes intimacy.
 - Make a point to spend at least 15 minutes of uninterrupted time with your partner each day.
 - Express your affection for each other every day.
 - Spend part of a day alone together at least once a week. Make a date to take a walk in the park, go out for dinner, or share other activities you both enjoy. Schedule time away together when you can.
 - Go to bed at the same time.
- Stay as physically active as you can. This allows more energy for sex.
- To help prevent possible problems with sexual satisfaction, follow your doctor's advice for a chronic illness.
- Practice safe sex to prevent sexually transmitted infections (if you are not in a long-term monogamous relationship).
- Keep the T.V. out of the bedroom.
- Discuss hormone therapy with your health care provider. Estrogen can help with vaginal dryness. It can help thicken the walls of the vagina.
- Use a water-soluble lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly, Replens, etc. Don't use oil or petroleum-based products. These encourage infection.



CONTACT DOCTOR WHEN:

- You have pain or bleeding during sex.
- You have signs and symptoms of an STI.
- You have sexual problems due to an illness, surgery, injury, or erectile dysfunction.
- You continue to have sexual problems after using self-care.