

# Take Back Your Sex Life

And increase well-being and happiness

Recent headlines based on a report from the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* caught the attention of a lot of readers. Americans are having less sex, the authors said, and more than one American adult undoubtedly said with relief, “So it’s not just me!”

According to the report, American adults had sex about nine times fewer per year in the early 2010s compared to the late 1990s. Declines in sexual frequency were similar across gender, race, region, educational level, and work status and were largest among those in their 50s and older and those with school-age children.





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## LIVING WELL

“Americans work more hours and spend more time with children than in the past, possibly reducing the amount of time that can be spent on sexual intimacy,” the authors wrote. To make matters worse, according to the March 2017 report’s findings, “Happiness among adults over 30 has declined since 2000, and more frequent sex is associated with higher levels of well-being and happiness.”

The implications are more important than they might seem. “What are the things that make life worth living?” asks Dr. Andre Berger, founder of the Rejuvalife Vitality Center in Beverly Hills. A healthy sex life, he says, “is certainly one of those key things. It’s an important part of life for most people.”

And for a lot of reasons, he adds. It enhances intimacy, increases happiness, reduces stress, boosts self-esteem, improves cardiovascular stamina, leads to better sleep, “and burns about 85 calories.” For men, Dr. Berger says, experiencing 21 ejaculations a month reduces the risk of prostate cancer. For women, it strengthens the pelvic floor.

But modern life—and aging—are playing havoc with people’s sex lives and affecting intimacy, desire, and satisfaction. “Sexual satisfaction is extremely important because of its contribution to the quality of life,” says Dr. Berger. “About 60 percent of men say it’s important, and 40 percent of women agree.” More sex makes for happier relationships, he says, but several factors may be interfering with sexual well-being.

### MAKE TIME FOR SELF-CARE

Focusing on women, Dr. Berger says lack of desire and inability to achieve orgasm cause the most distress, although sexual pain disorders can also be a factor. “Among women, 44 percent have female sexual disorder and 26 percent complain of orgasm disorder. It’s a big problem, and not a coffee table discussion.”

Emotional, physiological, and lifestyle issues contribute to the problem,

including depression or anxiety, changes in the body related to hysterectomy, menopause, medications, negative self-image, past negative sexual experiences or abuse, and the stressful distractions of work and family responsibilities.

“Women have to stop doing everything for everybody,” Dr. Berger says. “It creates resentment, and you need to eliminate resentment to gain intimacy. They need to take time for self-care.” In addition, “stress kills sex,” he says, affecting important hormones for women including estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, cortisol, and others that influence libido and sexual function.

For postmenopausal women, who range in age from the mid 50s to early 60s, hormone levels decrease significantly. In addition, many medications can affect sexual function, including birth control pills, antidepressants, blood pressure drugs, and statins, he notes, “but women can take back their sex lives.”

### STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

Treatments to help women regain their sex drive include medication, regaining hormonal balance, natural supplements, and mindfulness. Dr. Berger says, “It’s important to get a proper medical evaluation,” including annual breast and pelvic exams. Hormone, cholesterol, and liver enzyme levels should also be measured, he adds; 25 percent of women have low testosterone, and that number climbs to 75 percent among postmenopausal women. Testosterone and estrogen, often called sex hormones, go hand-in-hand, with low testosterone linked to lower libido and low levels of estrogen causing vaginal dryness and thinning of the vaginal wall.

“Testosterone replacement treatment can be given in a number of ways to help fix this problem,” Dr. Berger says, including patches, pellets, transdermal creams and gels, or even injections. Estrogen also plays a vital role in female sexual function, he adds, and replacement therapy, in the form of

pills, patches, or creams, can ease vaginal dryness. Vaginal suppositories can also be helpful.

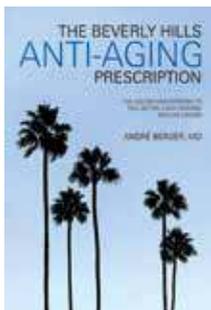
Cortisol balance is important too, as high levels can interfere with progesterone and testosterone production. Nourishing vitamins and minerals are another approach women can take to boost libido and revive their sex lives, Dr. Berger says, with herbal supplements such as maca, Asian ginseng, red clover, black cohosh, epimedium, and muira puama.

#### A PARTNER EFFORT

Medications and supplements can treat some of the problems that affect women's sexual dysfunction, but reducing stress and getting in touch with your senses "allows you to rewire the brain for sex," Dr. Berger says. Mindfulness practices help take the mind off stressful situations and allow practitioners to be in the moment, whether it's prayer, meditation, yoga, deep breathing, a relaxing bath, or a nature walk. If the issue is long-standing, however, Dr. Berger recommends getting a referral to a sex therapist.

Women can't go it alone, though. "Reduced sex drive and reduced libido are usually a partner problem," Dr. Berger says. Both partners need to be part of any efforts to enhance intimacy and their sex lives. ←

*This is part one of a two-part feature exploring sexual dysfunction in women and men. We will explore the causes and treatments for men in our next edition.*



For more information, see Dr. Andre Berger's book THE BEVERLY HILLS ANTI-AGING PRESCRIPTION.

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