

LIVEN UP YOUR LIBIDO

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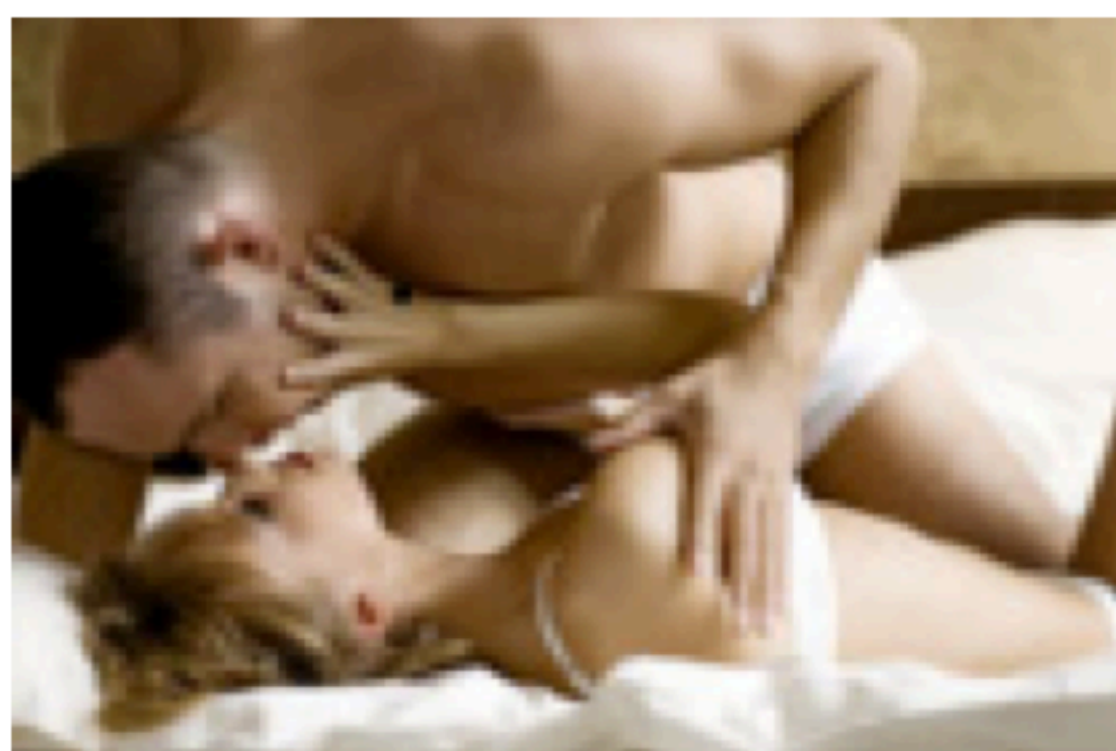
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"I'm tired." "I have a headache." "There are too many other things to do." Sound familiar? They're all common excuses people give to avoid having sex. But like proper nutrition and getting enough exercise, engaging in regular love making with your partner is an important and vital part of one's overall health. To understand why libido is so important, and how we can get the va-va-va-voom back in the bedroom, we talked to Toronto-based leading occupational and sex therapist Kelli Young.



LIBIDO CAN WAX AND WANE -- WHEN TO WORRY

SheKnows.com: What exactly *is* libido?

Kelli Young: Libido refers to one's sex drive or appetite for sexual activity, either alone or with a partner. A woman's libido encompasses her sexual thoughts, fantasies, desires and interest in engaging in sexual behaviors.

SheKnows.com: Is there such thing as a normal sex drive?

Kelli Young: In a word... no. There really is no such thing as a "normal" sex drive. Women vary greatly in their desire for sex. It is not uncommon to experience a temporary decline in sex drive and, in fact, many women do at various times in their lives.

SheKnows.com: When should a woman worry about her libido?

Kelli Young: If a woman notices that this drop in sex drive persists, or that her formerly normal sex drive is gone completely, it may be cause for concern. In medical terms, low sex drive, or hypoactive sexual desire disorder, is defined as a persistent or recurrent lack of sexual fantasies, thoughts and/or interest in sexual activity that causes personal distress. Women experiencing low desire may notice signs such as: a decline in the frequency of sexual thoughts and fantasies; reduced sexual desire; reluctance to initiate or engage in sex; and less frequent masturbation.

MANY FACTORS DAMPEN SEXUAL DESIRE

SheKnows.com: What can affect a woman's sex drive? Why does it change?

Kelli Young: All women will notice natural and normal fluctuations in their sexual appetites over time. Many of these changes result from hormonal fluctuations (during menstruation, pregnancy, perimenopause, etc.) and may affect a woman's body image and self-image (she may feel less desirable or sexy, and, in turn, less sexual).

Lack of arousal can also be associated with insufficient vaginal lubrication, which can lead to vaginal irritation or pain and may even trigger vaginal or urinary tract infections. When sex is unfulfilling or painful, a woman is unlikely to desire it, and she may begin to fear or avoid it.

Many physical and mental illnesses can negatively affect a woman's libido, as can the medications often used to treat these illnesses. Several medications have serious sexual side effects.

Lifestyle, nutrition and stress level can also play a role in dampening sexual desire. The demands of juggling work, family and other responsibilities can be exhausting and overwhelming; there may be little energy and enthusiasm left for sex. Negative sexual experiences can also impact a woman's enjoyment of and desire for sex. Finally, relationship problems and difficulties in communication can have a major detrimental influence on a woman's sex drive.

NATURAL WAYS TO LIVEN YOUR LIBIDO

SheKnows.com: How can a woman increase her libido/sex drive?

Kelli Young: There are some relatively simple steps women can take to improve their libido.

These may include:

1. **Talk to a doctor.** Consult with a medical and/or naturopathic professional who can test for, and treat, potential underlying illnesses or physiological causes of low libido. If you are prescribed medications, be sure to discuss possible sexual side effects. Sometimes, an equally effective medication can be prescribed that has fewer (or no) sexual side effects.
2. **Consider a natural libido supplement.** Many women have noted significant improvement in vaginal lubrication and sensitivity while using a natural libido supplement, such as [FemMED's Libido formula](#).
3. **Get to know your own body, sexually.** Self-stimulation (masturbation) can be an excellent way for a woman to develop a good understanding of the types of stimulation she finds arousing.
4. **Use a water-based lubricant.** Even if you have adequate natural lubrication, the extra slipperiness afforded by a water-based lubricant can be highly arousing for women and their partners!
5. **Make lifestyle adjustments.** Moderate exercise and a healthy diet are vital to maintaining a good sex drive. Chronic dieting can have a devastating impact on your energy level, metabolism and body image. Moreover, diets that are very low in fat are particularly problematic because your body needs some fat to make hormones such as testosterone, a hormone essential for sexual drive and response. Yoga, mindful meditation and courses in assertiveness and stress management can also help women acquire important tools to deal with the daily stressors that can dampen one's sexual desire.
6. **Do Kegels.** Kegel exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles, which can improve sensation and enhance sexual pleasure. ([Your guide to Kegels](#))
7. **Address relationship issues.** The quality of a relationship, particularly a couple's communication, has a significant impact on their sexual satisfaction.
8. **Seek counseling when necessary.** At times, it may be helpful to seek counseling from a sex therapist or couples counselor skilled in addressing sexual issues.