

Becoming More Interested in Sex

Following a disability or chronic illness many people notice that they are less interested in sex. This can happen for a variety of reasons. You may be experiencing some emotional or psychological changes that cause you to be less interested. If there is a brain injury some of the regions of the brain that are involved with sexual drive can actually be affected. Some medications can also cause you to feel less interested.

Give yourself time after the injury to regain your sexual drive. Some people think about sex right after their injury. For others, sex may not be at the top of their list of priorities and they may wait months or years to experiment and learn more. In some cases your partner may be more concerned about your lack of interest than you are. Feeling sexual again can take time – only you will know when you are ready.

Physical Changes

Many people suppress their interest in sex when physical changes occur, for example, loss of sensation or changes to erection. They may be fearful of rejection and may begin to protect themselves from feelings of hurt or loss by not starting sexual activity. If you suspect that these kinds of feelings are affecting you or your partner it is important to get more information from your doctor or from the sexual health clinician. In many cases, treatment can improve some of the physical changes.

Remember that some of the physical signs of sexual arousal (for example, erection, lubrication, nipples hardening) may be altered or gone. If you or your partner previously relied on these signs for confirmation of sexual arousal or interest this can be confusing. Remember that arousal is mostly felt in the brain. You will need to communicate feelings of sexual arousal and interest in other ways now. You can do this verbally by just telling your partner that you are aroused or through moans or other sounds that indicate arousal and interest.

Medications

Some medications have side effects that can cause you to feel less interested in sex. If you suspect this is a problem for you, talk to your doctor to discuss reducing the dosage or changing to a different medication. Do not stop taking the medication without talking to your doctor!

Pain, Fatigue and Stress

Both pain and fatigue can cause a decrease in sexual interest. Find out if there are pain management strategies that you can use. Make sure that you get enough rest or plan sexual activity for times when you are the most energetic. Many people find that mornings are a good time for them.

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The stress of having health problems and being separated from your partner while you are in hospital can certainly interfere with your sexual drive.

Depression and Feeling Down

Following an injury it is normal to feel down and depressed for a time. You and your partner will be experiencing some significant changes to many aspects of your life. These are normal feelings to have in the short term. However if you continue to feel down and depressed and you think that those feelings are affecting your functioning and relationships it is important to talk to a doctor or other health care professional.

Depression can lower your interest in sex. Generally when someone is depressed they experience a loss of enjoyment in many pleasurable activities – including sex.

If you are depressed and your doctor prescribes anti-depressants you may notice an increased interest in being sexual as your depression goes away. Some antidepressants have side effects that can decrease your sex drive. If this is a concern talk to your doctor about it.

Rebuilding Sexual Interest

Resuming a sexually active life may take a bit of work initially. Feeling sexy is related to how you feel about yourself.

- Start to talk about your sexual feelings with your partner.
- Read stories or watch movies or videos that evoke sexual feelings in you. These do not have to be pornographic movies or images – sometimes even romantic stories can cause a sexual response.
- Begin to pay attention to your sexual thoughts and dreams. Sometimes we are so busy in our daily lives that we fail to notice how we feel.
- Remind yourself of the pleasure and good feelings that you used to experience during sex. Visualize past experiences and use fantasy to enhance your own feelings of sexual interest.
- Treat your body in a sexual and sensual way. Wear clothing that makes you feel sexual. Get a massage. Stroke your own body (all over) in sensual ways.
- Actively seek out information so that you understand the changes in your body and find out what you can do to feel comfortable having sex.
- For many people, past sexual experiences have been negative. Some people may have experienced sexual abuse. If this is the case it is vital that you seek out resources to help you overcome the potential negative effects of this on your life.

Medical Disclaimer: The above information is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always ask your physician or other qualified health professional about any matter concerning your individual health.

Revised: January, 2007, by Sally Breen, RN, BSN

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For further information: Contact the Sexual Health Rehab Service, GF Strong Rehab Centre