

View this article online at: patient.info/news-and-features/whats-the-cause-of-your-low-sex-drive

The most likely reasons for your low sex drive

It certainly wouldn't be convenient to have sex constantly on the brain. But it's natural to worry about whether your desire (or lack of it) is normal. Here, we explore the complexities of libido and how to seek help if you think yours is in need of a boost.

What does 'normal' look like?

Your libido, or how much you think about and want sex, varies enormously between people and even in the same person. For instance, in a long-term relationship, many people find their levels of desire fade a little as time passes. But this is not usually something to fret about.

Psychologist [Dr Becky Spelman](#), relationship expert at We-Vibe, reveals: "Our libidos ebb and wane depending on what is going on in our lives, and all sorts of personal and external influences can have an impact. Women and men alike often find that their libido is negatively impacted when they are experiencing [stress](#), perhaps because they've had a setback at work, or are concerned that they are no longer as attractive as they once were."

And do men really think about sex every seven seconds? Well, probably not. [Sexual researchers reckon](#) that the majority of men and women think about making love most days. And this varies from a single passing thought to as many as a hundred a day. While some people, of course, go for long periods without thinking about sex at all. As you've probably guessed, research can't really tell us what a 'normal' sex drive looks like. All that really matters is whether you're comfortable with yours.

What causes low sex drive?

Desiring sex less than you used to is very common. Loss of libido can affect people of any gender and sexuality. And most people experience it at some point. But whether it's a problem for you depends on how long it lasts, how severe it is, and whether it affects your relationship – which may depend on whether your partner's sex drive matches yours.

As mentioned, sex drive does naturally rise and fall for most people. But a loss of libido can sometimes indicate a physical or mental health problem, particularly if you notice a marked or prolonged change.

Illness

Chronic conditions that can impact on your sense of well-being, such as [cancer](#), [diabetes](#), heart disease, chronic pain, and [obesity](#), can all affect your libido.

Mental health

Any form of mental health condition (particularly [depression](#)) may affect your sex drive. Likewise, the [antidepressants](#) used to treat the illness can also impact your libido. You should speak to your doctor if you think your medication is affecting your sex life.

Of course, dampened desire can often hint at a self-confidence problem, points out Spelman.

"Self-esteem and libido are so entangled with feelings of self-worth that relate to our physical appearance. There's nothing at all sexy about feeling undesirable, which in itself can lead to heightened levels of stress. We all need to have realistic expectations for ourselves."

Hormones

Hormones can also affect libido, particularly around pregnancy and the [menopause](#). This includes sex hormones, [thyroid](#) hormone and cortisol. Some women find being on particular brands of [the contraceptive pill](#) can affect their sex life too.

Relationship difficulties

Relationship difficulties are probably the most obvious cause of lost sex drive within long-term relationships. And if your desire is gone, it's worth taking a long look at whether your partner is who you really want to be with. On the other hand, you may just be mismatched when it comes to sex drive, suggests Spelman. And that shouldn't necessarily spell the end for you as a couple.

"Some people are night owls, while others are morning birds. It can be very frustrating when one person is in the mood late at night, while all the other wants is to snuggle under the duvet and get some sleep. It is also quite normal for couples to go through periods when one of them is much more interested in sex than the other. The answer to this imbalance is patience and love on both sides."

She hints that couples whose sex drives seem to be more permanently mismatched may have to work harder to find a solution, but masturbation can also play a role in helping to avoid sexual frustration.

How to boost your libido

Unfortunately, there's no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to boosting your sex drive. But there are three main areas to consider:

Look at your lifestyle

Maximising your health and getting medical help with any chronic conditions is a good start. If you are taking medication already then ask your doctor if it could be affecting your sex life, because there might be alternatives you can try.

If you don't take [regular exercise](#) then starting to do so is probably the single best thing that you can do for your sex drive. Obviously making sure you're [eating healthily](#) is a good idea too.

Mind your mind

Taking steps to improve your mental health is likely to improve your mood, your self-esteem and, therefore, your sex drive. For some people, [exercise can help with mental health](#). And [mindfulness](#) is another way of tackling stress.

If you think you might be suffering from [anxiety](#), [depression](#) or another mental health problem, it's important to see your doctor.

Communicate

Talking to your partner about a sexual problem is never easy but opening up can make you feel less anxious about the situation in the long term. Of course, sometimes loss of libido is a sign of a more insoluble relationship difficulty which can be harder to rectify. Some couples find relationship counselling very useful, however.

"Communication is the key to a great sex life. Outside of the context of sex, talk to one another about what you like, and what makes you feel good. Be willing to experiment and think outside the box. Remember that your partner may not be able to guess what feels good to you, and instead listen to what they have to say," concludes Spelman.

Dr Mary Lowth is an author or the original author of this leaflet.

Disclaimer: This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

Last updated by: Natalie Healey 02/02/2018	
Peer reviewed by: Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP 02/02/2018	

View this article online at: patient.info/news-and-features/whats-the-cause-of-your-low-sex-drive

Discuss The most likely reasons for your low sex drive and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).



To find out more visit www.patientaccess.com
or download the app



Follow us

