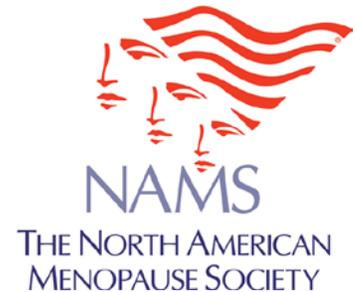


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New Study Shows How Women Adapt to Changes in Sexual Function With Age

Less sex doesn't necessarily mean less satisfaction

CLEVELAND, Ohio (October 5, 2016)—Numerous quantitative studies have shown that many aspects of sexual function decline in midlife women. But the news might not be all bad, as a new study coming out of the University of Pittsburgh demonstrates how many midlife women are effectively adapting to changes in sexual function and actually experiencing greater satisfaction. The study will be presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) in Orlando, October 5-8.

The new qualitative study was designed to dig deeper than previous studies that focused on specific physical changes such as vaginal dryness, lower libido, and decreased responsiveness. Talking at length with three different focus groups and reviewing 20 interviews, the researchers sought to better understand women's feelings about their body changes and how they were coping.

Of note was the fact that more women attributed negative changes such as lower libido and decreased frequency of sex to psychosocial stresses, including family and career, than to biological factors such as menopause. For some women, partner issues, including partner health problems, relationship discord, and partner sexual dysfunction, were identified as major causes of negative sexual changes. In fact, several women noted that their libidos were much higher than their male partners' were.

Among the women who reported positive changes, several women noted that although the frequency of sexual activity had decreased, their satisfaction with sex had increased. They attributed these positive changes to higher self-confidence, increased self-knowledge, and better communication skills as they aged.

“One of the most enlightening findings of this study was the large number of women who had successfully adapted to any negative changes by modifying their expectations regarding sexual activity, putting more emphasis on the emotional and intimacy aspects of sex, or adapting the sex acts themselves,” says Holly Thomas, MD, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Pittsburgh and the lead author of the study.

Adaptations reported included use of vaginal lubricants, lengthening foreplay, incorporating other types of sex besides penetrative intercourse (oral and manual stimulation), trying other sexual positions, masturbating more, and encouraging use of erectile dysfunction treatments for their partners.

“As this study demonstrates, healthcare providers need to have honest conversations with their midlife women patients to fully evaluate changes in sexual function and be ready to explore psychosocial and interpersonal factors, as well as physical changes, to effectively identify proper treatment,” says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director.

Drs. Thomas and Pinkerton are available for interviews before the presentation at the annual meeting.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.