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Better Sleep Can Lead to Better Sex

Study confirms association between shorter sleep durations, higher insomnia symptoms, and decreased sexual function in postmenopausal women

CLEVELAND, Ohio (February 1, 2017)—Sleep disturbance is common for many women during menopause, creating an array of adverse health outcomes such as heart disease, hypertension, and depression. A new study shows that sleep problems can also interfere with a woman’s level of sexual satisfaction. The study outcomes are being published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

According to data analyzed for 93,668 women aged 50 to 79 years who were enrolled in the Women’s Health Initiative Observational Study, short sleep duration (defined as fewer than 7 to 8 hours per night) was associated with lower odds of sexual satisfaction. Of the participants, 56% reported being somewhat or very satisfied with their current sexual activity, and 52% reported partnered sexual activity within the last year. Insomnia prevalence was 31%.

The *Menopause* article “Association of sleep disturbance and sexual function in postmenopausal women” describes how the relationship between sleep length and quality with sexual satisfaction remained even after adjusting for other possible causes of sleep deprivation, including depression and chronic disease. This relationship, however, did vary across age groups. Older women, for example, were less likely to be sexually active if they slept fewer than 7 to 8 hours per night compared with younger women. In fact, women aged older than 70 years who slept fewer than 5 hours were 30% less likely to be sexually active than women sleeping 7 to 8 hours. It is already known that the prevalence of sleep problems increases with age.

“Women and healthcare providers need to recognize the link between menopause symptoms and inadequate sleep and their effects on sexual satisfaction,” says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director. “There are effective treatment options to help with sleep disruption and sexual satisfaction, including hormone therapy, which this study confirmed to be effective at menopause for symptomatic women.”

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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.