



## Sexual Changes with Aging

### Physical Changes For Men:

- It may take longer to get an erection and to ejaculate.
- Erections may not be as hard or as large as in earlier years.
- The feeling that an ejaculation is about to happen may be shorter.
- After an ejaculation, more time needs to pass to get a second erection.
- Some males find they need more manual stimulation.
- The chances for erectile dysfunction (ED) increase.

### Physical Changes For Women:

- The vagina is drier. The walls of the vagina get thinner and less elastic. These can make sex uncomfortable.
- It may take longer to feel aroused.
- Orgasms can be shorter or less intense than in years past.

### Changes from Health Conditions:

Sexual health can be affected by many conditions. These include:

- Certain medicines. Ask your doctor if medicines you take affect your sexual response.

- Alcohol
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- HIV and STIs
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Cancer and side effects of cancer treatment
- Surgery that involves the sex organs, such as a hysterectomy



### Emotional Changes:

How people feel can affect what they are able to do.

- As persons age, they may feel more anxious about their appearance or ability to perform. This can interfere with the ability to enjoy sex.
- Not having a partner through choice, divorce, or death may make it difficult to deal with sexual feelings. Masturbation can bring sexual pleasure, but persons who have been taught that it is wrong are reluctant to do it.
- A lack of sexual desire can result in having sex less often. This may be due to lower hormone levels or having an illness or a disability.



### *Sexual Changes with Aging, Continued*

Some changes that come with aging can result in positive emotional changes:

- After menopause, both men and women may feel less anxious about having sex because they don't have to worry about a pregnancy.
- A woman may get more sexual pleasure due to having a drier, thinner, and smaller vagina which allows her to feel more friction and stimulation during sex.
- A couple may have more time and privacy for sex if their children are grown and spend less time at home.



### **Self-Care:**

#### **Tips for Sexual Health:**

- Have sex often. Have sex when you are less tired, such as in the morning.
  - Express your needs. Let your partner express his or her needs, too. Talk about your fears, fantasies, etc.
  - Spend more time on foreplay. Let your partner know where and how you want to be touched.
  - Take the pressure off your partner. Tell him or her that you know sex can take longer. Express your need for intimacy, not just performance.
- Avoid or limit alcohol. A little alcohol can act as an aphrodisiac. Too much can interfere with sex and lead to unsafe sex.
  - Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any medicines you take can affect your sex life. Find out if another medicine can be used without this side effect.
  - Stay as physically fit as you can. This allows more energy for sex.
  - Plan time to be alone together and for sex. This promotes intimacy.
    - Make a point to spend at least 15 minutes of uninterrupted time with your partner each day.
    - Express your affection for each other every day.
    - Spend part of a day alone together at least once a week. Make a date to take a walk in the park, go out for dinner, or share other activities you both enjoy. Schedule time away together when you can.
    - Go to bed at the same time.
  - To help prevent possible problems with sexual satisfaction, follow your doctor's advice for a chronic illness.

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### *Sexual Changes with Aging, Continued*

#### *Self-Care, Continued*

- Practice safe sex to prevent sexually transmitted infections. (See at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).)
- Give each other a massage or take a shower together.
- Keep the T.V. out of the bedroom.



Plan to spend time  
with each other.

#### **Tips for Men:**

- See “Causes” and “Prevention/Self-Care” for “Erectile Dysfunction (ED)” at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).
- Talk to your doctor about your concerns. Be open and honest.

#### **Tips for Women:**

- Discuss hormone therapy with your doctor (see at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com)). Estrogen can help with vaginal dryness. It can help thicken the walls of the vagina.
- Use a water-soluble lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly, Replens, etc. Don't use oil or petroleum-based products. These encourage infection.

- Remain sexually active. Having sex often may lessen the chance of having the vagina constrict, helps keep natural lubrication, and maintains pelvic muscle tone. This includes reaching orgasm with a partner or alone.
- If you can, avoid using antihistamines. They dry mucus membranes in the body.
- Don't use deodorant soaps or scented products in the vaginal area.



#### **Contact Doctor When:**

- You have pain or bleeding during sex.
- You have signs and symptoms of an STI. (See “STIs Chart” at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).)
- You have sexual problems due to an illness, surgery, injury, or erectile dysfunction (see at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com)).
- You continue to have sexual problems after using self-care.