

Lack of Sexual Desire - Decreased libido

by Pat Connor, MD

Defined as a lack of sexual desire that causes a woman personal distress, HYPOACTIVE SEXUAL DESIRE DISORDER, or decreased libido, is a common (yet not often discussed) medical problem among women today. Further defined, it includes a persistent or recurring deficiency or absence of sexual fantasies or thoughts, or a lack of interest in sexual activity.

Decreased libido may be the result of medical factors (such as medications), emotional factors (such as depression), or menopause (either natural or surgical). It is the end result of a complex interaction of biological, psychological and social dynamics. It is certainly an important part of a woman's overall health and without hesitation, it should be brought up for discussion at her annual checkup with the Ob/Gyn healthcare provider.

After a complete history and physical examination is performed and appropriate blood tests are ordered, a follow up visit to discuss the matter in more detail and to review the laboratory findings is advised. Recommended therapies are then discussed based on review of all the information at hand. These therapies sometimes include a change of medications (including birth control pills and some antidepressants), referral to appropriate psychologist or therapist, and if indicated, testosterone replacement. The use of testosterone replacement, though controversial, has been shown to greatly improve libido when hypoactive sexual desire disorder and low serum testosterone levels are present.

There is also a new FDA approved medication to treat low libido. If you are interested in discussing this medication, please speak with your physician.

For a thorough understanding of this and other sexual dysfunctions, Jennifer and Laura Berman's *For Women Only* (2001) serves as an excellent resource. Please feel comfortable in approaching this important subject with your physician/allied health care provider.

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