

## Libido - relationship issues

Libido, which means sex drive or the desire for sex, varies dramatically from one person to the next. It also varies depending on a person's preferences and life circumstances. Libido can be affected by medical conditions, hormone levels, medications, lifestyle and relationship problems.

Most new couples, for example, go through an early period of having a lot of sex that then slows down over time. On the other hand, a busy life can leave some people too tired or preoccupied to even think about sex.

### There isn't a 'normal' libido

There is no 'normal' when it comes to how often you have sex. Some people have sex (or feel like having sex) every day, others once a year or not at all. It all depends on what you prefer and your life circumstances.

Unless you're worried about your sex drive or it's causing problems between you and your partner, you don't need to seek professional help.

### Reasons for a lessened libido

As well as medical conditions and the side effects of some medications, a lot of other factors can lessen a person's sex drive, including:

- **Performance anxiety** – premature ejaculation or painful sex can make a person avoid sex out of fear it could happen again.
- **Fatigue** – feeling too tired for sex is common.
- **Lack of time** – the demands of work and home life might not leave enough time for intimacy and sex.
- **Familiarity** – a couple's desire for sex tends to lessen over time.
- **Sexual incompatibility** – sexual desire can be affected if a person constantly wants more sex than their partner or wants a type of sexual activity that their partner isn't comfortable with.
- **Sexual turn-offs** – sexual attraction to your partner might lessen if there are changes in their physical appearance, such as excessive weight gain.
- **Depression** – can cause tiredness, lack of motivation, feeling sad and withdrawing from activities, including sex.
- **Stress** – researchers have found stress hormones can lessen sexual desire and response.
- **Exercise** – either too much or too little can cause a loss of sex drive.
- **Traumatic experience** – such as sexual harassment, sexual abuse or rape, can lessen sexual desire.

### Relationship issues

A lessened sex drive might also be caused by relationship problems. If a couple is having problems in other areas of their relationship, their sex life might be affected.

### Counselling can help

If a couple isn't satisfied with their sex life, they can seek professional counselling to:

- Learn communication skills to improve the overall quality of the relationship
- Try to resolve underlying problems, such as tension
- Learn how to increase intimacy and physical affection without having sex

- Learn different sexual techniques
- Talk about sexual desires and fantasies together
- Learn strategies to boost sex drive, such as masturbating and fantasising.

## Where to get help

- Doctor
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100
- Sex therapist
- Psychologist
- Relationship counsellor.

## Things to remember

- Sex drive varies dramatically from one person to the next and even for the same person, depending on what they prefer and their life circumstances.
- Factors that can lessen a person's desire for sex include tiredness, lack of time, depression, sexual incompatibility and some medications.
- If a couple is having problems in other areas of their relationship, their sex life might be affected.
- Counselling can help treat a loss of sex drive if relationship problems are an underlying cause.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Family Planning Victoria

Content on this website is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content has been prepared for Victorian residents and wider Australian audiences, and was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

For the latest updates and more information, visit [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

**Copyright** © 1999/2011 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel ([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.