Sex and Aging

Overview

Changes in sexual desire and behavior throughout your life cycle are normal. This is especially true as you enter your later years. Some people buy into the stereotype that older people don't have sex. But in fact, many people remain sexually active throughout their lives.

Intimacy and connection are still important later in life. The best predictor of sexual interest and activity in your later years may be the frequency of sexual activity when you're younger. If sex is central to your lifestyle and happiness at age 30, it will probably still be important at age 60. Over the years, your "attachment" to your partner may become more important than "attraction." And you may measure your relationship satisfaction more in terms of affection,

Learn how aging may affect your sexual habits — and steps you can take to enjoy a safe and satisfying sex life as you get older.

Why do sexual desire and behavior change? When sexual activity decreases or ceases for older men, common causes include:

• lack of desire, usually resulting from medications

- difficulties maintaining an erection
- poor general health

security, and commitment than sexual fulfillment.

Common causes for declining sexual activity among older women include: • lack of desire, usually resulting from medications

hormonal changes linked to menopause

loss of a partner

Although your interest in sexual activity may continue into your older age, people tend to have

different positions for intercourse. This can be off-putting to some people, while others enjoy it. SHOP GIFT SETS ▶

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less intercourse as they get older. Some illnesses and disabilities may also compel you to try

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How can you maintain a satisfying sex life?

The following strategies may help you enjoy a satisfying sex life as you get older. Stay sexually fit

Men who have frequent penile stimulation have an easier time getting and maintaining

erections. Women who have frequent genital and clitoral stimulation have better selflubrication. To help you stay "sexually fit," it may help to masturbate or give yourself pleasure.

can engage in intimate acts and benefit from physical closeness.

sharing sexual fantasies, reading erotica, petting, caressing, and kissing.

Masturbating is a normal part of a healthy sex life.

Improve your communication

humor may help take the pressure off.

Explore outercourse

Take the pressure off by expanding your idea of sex to include more than penetration and orgasm. Outercourse is the term used to describe a wide variety of erotic experiences that don't include penetrative sex. It's about pleasure and connectedness. Take your time, relax,

and enjoy the experience of sensual touching. Many people get enormous gratification from

A good sex life involves more than just intercourse. It's also about intimacy and touch. Those

are activities that anyone can benefit from. Even if you're ill or have physical disabilities, you

and desires to your partner. People sometimes assume their partners know what they like in the bedroom. But that's not always true. Like many people, you may feel reluctant to give your partner sexual feedback or directions. You may feel shy, embarrassed, or worried about hurting their feelings. But try to remember,

communication is key to a satisfying sex life. Be honest and open with your partner. Using

As your body and feelings change with age, it's important to communicate your thoughts, fears,

People age 55 years or older account for one-quarter of all Americans living with HIV, reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention . In 2013, people aged 50 and over constituted more than 27 percent of new AIDS diagnoses. Older adults are also at risk of other

sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including genital herpes, genital warts, chlamydia,

What steps should you take to stay safe?

gonorrhea, and syphilis. Many doctors are reluctant to talk about sex with older people. It may also be harder to recognize the symptoms of some STIS among older adults. For example, some symptoms of HIV can mimic those of other illnesses that commonly affect older adults. Those symptoms include tiredness, confusion, loss of appetite, and swollen glands.

STIs. If you suspect you have an STI, talk to your doctor. They can prescribe treatments to relieve your symptoms. In some cases, they can even cure your infection altogether. They can also share tips to help stop the spread of infection.

If you're sexually active, practice safe sex by using condoms and learning to recognize signs of

#12 BEST UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

It's normal for your sexual desires and behaviors to change as you get older. But sex and

physical intimacy remain important to many older adults. Staying sexually fit through

masturbation, exploring new sexual activities, and practicing good communication may help you and your partner sexually satisfy each other. And remember, it's important to use condoms during intercourse to help stop the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Safe sex is

important, even as you get older.

The takeaway

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