

Male Sexuality and Aging

How Can One Maintain A Satisfying Sex Life?

Obviously, no simple answer will do. It's important to note that this is a problematic issue not only for you, but for your partner as well. You should be reassured by the fact that recent studies of aging lovers report a wide variation in the frequency and the kinds of sexual experience sought by older people. "Normal" appears to be everything from holding hands at midnight to active sexual intercourse.

Perhaps the best general advice is to forget all the jokes you've ever heard about frustrated old men. If you know that certain gradual changes will occur, you are less likely to worry.

A man's general vitality and continuing sexual activity in middle age seems to be the most important indicators of what his sex life will be like in later years. The man aged 40 to 60 who engages in sex on a regular basis is most likely to have a satisfying sex life after 60.

Here are some things to remember. In older men:

- 1) It takes longer to get an erection and the penis may require direct stimulation before the erection occurs.
- 2) Longer periods of stimulation are needed to reach orgasm.
- 3) The force and volume of the ejaculation diminishes.
- 4) After ejaculation, the recovery period increases. A late middle-aged or older man may need from 12 to 24 hours or longer before another erection is possible.

If a man has no medical reason for impotence and does not suffer from psychological blocks, his ability to have an erection will probably not be significantly impaired by age. However, certain factors can cause a temporary loss of function. These include:

Therapeutic drugs. Medications such as tranquilizers, high blood-pressure drugs, and antidepressants can interfere with sexual function. Check with your doctor to find out about side effects of any drugs you are taking.

Alcohol. Alcohol, being a depressant, can numb the senses and cause temporary impotence.

Psychoactive drugs. Marijuana, LSD, cocaine, and others that are sometimes taken to heighten sexual experience can interfere with erection in men and orgasms in both men and women.

Mental stress. A man preoccupied with problems at work or in his relationships may lose both the desire for sex and the ability to obtain or maintain an erection.

Physical fatigue. Physical activity in a well-conditioned man does not interfere with sexual interest. However, unaccustomed physical activity for the out-of-condition older man can cause loss of sexual responsiveness for 24 to 48 hours.

Smoking. Smoking can cause tightening of the arteries to the penis, reducing the quality of erections. It may take two to three months of smoking cessation to see results.