

Researcher presents risk-free treatment for low female sexual desire

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According to the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, people who engage in regular sexual activity gain several health benefits, such as longer lives, healthier hearts, lower blood pressure, and lower risk of breast cancer. However, approximately 33 percent of women may not receive these benefits due to low sexual desire. Also, the marriages of women with low sexual desire may also be at risk, given a recent statistic that 25 percent of divorce is due to sexual dissatisfaction.

Some doctors are prescribing testosterone patches for women with low sexual desire. However, research shows that testosterone patches might increase the risk of [breast cancer](#) when used for just a year. Researchers are currently testing a new drug, flibanserin, which was developed as an antidepressant and affects neurotransmitters in the brain, to treat women with low sexual desire. However, experts are concerned about the side effects of this possible treatment. Now, a University of Missouri researcher has found evidence that a low-cost, risk-free psychological treatment is effective and may be a better alternative to drugs that have adverse side effects.

"Low sexual desire is the number one problem women bring to sex therapists," said Laurie Mintz, associate professor of educational, school and counseling psychology in the MU College of Education. "Drugs to treat low sexual desire may take the focus away from the most common culprits of diminished desire in women, including lack of information on how our own bodies work, body image issues, relationship issues and a stressful lifestyle. Indeed, research demonstrates that relationship issues

are far more important in predicting women's sexual desire than are hormone levels. Before women seek medical treatments, they should consider [psychological treatment](#)."

Mintz has authored a book based on this premise. In her book, Mintz suggests a six-step psycho-educational and cognitive-behavioral treatment approach that she based on scientific literature and more than 20 years of clinical knowledge. The treatment plan includes chapters about one's thoughts about sex, how to talk with your partner, the importance of spending time together, ways to touch each other in both erotic and non-erotic ways, how to make time for sex and different ways to make sexual activity exciting and thus, increase women's sexual desire.

In a study demonstrating the effectiveness of her treatment, Mintz recruited married women between the ages of 28 to 65, who said they were uninterested in [sexual activity](#). All the women were employed and a majority had children. All participants completed an online survey that measured sexual desire and sexual functioning. Then half of the participants were selected randomly to read her book and perform the exercises outlined in her book. After six weeks, they were emailed the same survey again. The control group did not read the book. Mintz found that the intervention group who read the book made significant gains in sexual desire and sexual functioning, compared to the control group who did not read the book. On average, women who read the book increased their level of sexual desire by almost 30 percent.

"This finding is especially exciting because low sexual desire among women has been not only the most common, but the least successfully treated of all the sexual problems brought to therapists" Mintz said. "Also, although other books have been written on the topic, this is the first to be tested for its effectiveness. In addition, unlike medical treatments such as testosterone, there are certainly no known negative

medical side effects associated with the treatment strategies in my book."

More information: Mintz will present her findings at the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT) annual conference.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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