

Placebo successful in treating women with sexual dysfunction

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A new study published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* reveals that women with low sexual arousal experienced clinically significant symptom changes after taking a placebo.

Andrea Bradford, Ph.D., a psychologist at Baylor College of Medicine, along with co-author Cindy Meston, Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin, analyzed the behaviors and symptoms of 50 women who were randomly chosen to receive [placebo](#) in a large clinical trial of a drug treatment for low sexual arousal. Neither the women nor the study doctors knew whether they were taking the real drug or placebo.

Results showed that, after 12 weeks of treatment, symptoms in about one in three of these women improved to a degree that most clinicians would consider a meaningful change. Most of that improvement seemed to happen during the first four weeks.

The most important predictor of symptom change was an increase in the frequency of satisfying sexual encounters during the treatment. Many women even reported that they received more stimulation during [sexual activity](#) while they participated in the trial, even though their partners were not given any special instructions.

"It's important to note that, even though these women received placebo, they all had an opportunity to talk to a health provider about their difficulties and were asked to closely monitor their sexual behavior and feelings over a 12-week period. Just taking part in this study probably

started some meaningful conversations," said Bradford. "Our study shows that even a limited intervention can have a positive effect in many [women](#) with [sexual dysfunction](#). This comes as no surprise to sex therapists, but it does suggest a need to investigate behavioral factors more closely in clinical trials."

Provided by Wiley

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