

Study finds sex a significant predictor of happiness among married seniors

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The more often older married individuals engage in sexual activity, the more likely they are to be happy with both their lives and marriages, according to new research presented in Boston at The Gerontological Society of America's (GSA) 64th Annual Scientific Meeting.

This finding is based on the 2004-2006 General Social Surveys, a public opinion poll conducted on a nationally [representative sample](#) of non-institutionalized English and Spanish-speaking person 18 years of age or older living in the U.S. The data analysis was conducted by Adrienne Jackson, PT, PhD, MPA, an assistant professor at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

"This study will help open the lines of communication and spark interest in developing 'outside the box' approaches to dealing with resolvable issues that limit or prevent [older adults](#) from participating in [sexual activity](#)," said Jackson. "Highlighting the relationship between sex and happiness will help us in developing and organizing specific [sexual health](#) interventions for this growing segment of our population."

Based on the survey responses of 238 married individuals age 65 years or older, Jackson discovered that frequency of sexual activity was a significant predictor of both general and marital happiness. The association even remained after accounting for factors such as age, gender, [health status](#), and satisfaction with [financial situation](#).

Whereas only 40 percent of individuals who reported no sexual activity

in the last 12 months said they were very happy with life in general, almost 60 percent who engaged in sexual activity more than once a month said they were very happy. Similarly, while about 59 percent of individuals who reported no sexual activity in the last 12 months said they were very happy with their marriage, almost 80 percent who had sex more than once a month said they were very happy. To assess frequency of sexual activity, respondents were asked the following question: "About how many times did you have sex during the last 12 months? By 'sex' we mean vaginal, oral, or anal sex." To assess general happiness, respondents were asked the following question: "Taken all together, how would you say things are these days — would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?" To assess marital happiness, respondents were asked the following question: "Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage? Would you say that your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?"

GSA's meeting — the country's largest interdisciplinary conference in the field of aging — is taking place at the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center and Sheraton Boston Hotel from November 18 to 22.

Provided by The Gerontological Society of America

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