

Most women on dialysis may experience sexual problems

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The vast majority of female kidney failure patients on dialysis may experience sexual problems, according to a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Clinical Journal of the American Society Nephrology* (CJASN). Additional studies are needed to understand how sexual dysfunction affects dialysis patients' quality of life and psychological wellbeing.

Patients on [dialysis](#) can experience symptoms—such as pain, depression, impaired sleep, and fatigue—that affect their [quality of life](#). [Sexual dysfunction](#) may also be a problem for many.

While there is increasing awareness of erectile dysfunction in men on hemodialysis, the sexual health of female dialysis patients has been examined in only a few suboptimally designed studies. To look at the issue more thoroughly, Giovanni Strippoli, MD, PhD (Diaverum AB and Consorzio Mario Negri Sud, in Italy) and his colleagues in the Collaborative Depression and Sexual Dysfunction in Hemodialysis Working Group examined the responses of 659 female dialysis patients in Europe and South America who completed a questionnaire called the Female Sexual Function Index. The researchers' analysis represents the first large study to examine sexual function in female [dialysis patients](#).

Among the major findings:

- 84% of all women and 55% of sexually active women in the

study experienced [sexual problems](#).

- Women with a partner were less likely to report sexual dysfunction than those without a partner.
- Sexual dysfunction occurred more often in women who were older, were less educated, had signs of depression, had reached menopause, had diabetes, and took diuretic therapy (which helps the body get rid of unneeded water and salt).
- Nearly all of the women (96%) who were not on a waiting list for a transplant and who were living without a partner reported sexual dysfunction.

"With this study, we shed light on the highly frequent condition of female sexual dysfunction in [women](#) on dialysis; this deserves attention and further study, since specific interventions are not yet available to address it," said Dr. Strippoli. "Clinicians should not overlook the importance of problems such sexual dysfunction in people who receive hemodialysis for renal replacement therapy," he added.

More information: The article, entitled "Sexual Dysfunction in Women with ESRD Requiring Hemodialysis," will appear online on April 5, 2012, [doi:10.2215/CJN.12601211](https://doi.org/10.2215/CJN.12601211)

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