

Better communication about sex is just as effective as 'female Viagra'

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A hormone treatment with oxytocin improves the sexual experience of women suffering from sexual dysfunction. This is the finding of a study conducted at MedUni Vienna, which has now been published in the prestigious journal *Fertility and Sterility*. However, a control group that only received a placebo via a nasal spray, showed similar improvements. Sexual dysfunction in women is therefore not merely a question of a chemical hormone deficiency but is often also a sign of a lack of communication with a partner and an expression of everyday stress, emphasizes Michaela Bayerle-Eder, specialist in internal medicine and sexual medicine at MedUni Vienna.

Oxytocin, which is known as the "bonding hormone", is also thought to enhance sexuality. In order to investigate this, 30 women taking part in an eight-month long-term study conducted by the Department of Clinical Pharmacology at MedUni Vienna used an oxytocin [nasal spray](#) immediately before intercourse. The test subjects were women with [sexual dysfunction](#) (arousal problems, inorgasmia, painful intercourse etc.). Together with their partners, the women kept a diary and used a questionnaire to assess how sexual function changed for them during the treatment. A [control group](#) was given a placebo for the same period of time.

The result: although the sex lives and sexual satisfaction of the women receiving oxytocin treatment improved significantly, the group that only received a placebo also had significantly improved scores.

Sexuality as the "highest" form of communication between two people

For project leader Michaela Bayerle-Eder, doctor of [internal medicine](#) and sexual medicine at MedUni Vienna (currently working in the Endocrinology Division of the University Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology), this proves just how important communication with one's partner is to [sexual satisfaction](#): "Clearly the fact that the women thought more about their sexuality and spoke with their partners about sex during the course of the study in itself brought about measurable improvements". This therefore suggests that it is often only misunderstandings that prevent couples from fully expressing and enjoying their sexuality. "Sexual problems are often caused by the stress of everyday life rather than any chemical deficiency in a woman's [hormone balance](#)." If sexual problems arise, it is therefore advisable to seek medical advice as soon as possible to try to track down the cause.

"Female Viagra" is not a wonder drug

An drug called flibanserin, which was only approved by the US FDA (Federal Drug Administration) at the third attempt and is being marketed in the US in October 2015 under the name "Addyi", produced similar results in clinical trials. This drug, which is being called a sex pill for women or "Female Viagra" changes the hormone balance in the brain and in this way increases a woman's sexual desire, thus resulting in more enjoyable sex. But, once again, clear improvements in [sexual function](#) were also found in the placebo group. Moreover, this drug has unpleasant side-effects such as dizziness, fatigue and nausea and can only be prescribed by doctors who have been trained in its use and are authorized to do so by the FDA. "So we are still a long way from a sex pill for women," explains Bayerle-Eder and makes the plea: "Up to 40% of [women](#) and more than 30% of men suffer from some form of sexual dysfunction, which detracts from their quality of life, and this figure is even as high as 90% amongst chronically ill patients. In order to meet the "WHO criteria 2006" for maintaining health, it is important that sexual medicine should be an important part of medical training and advanced training."

More information: Dana A. Muin et al. Effect of long-term intranasal oxytocin on sexual dysfunction in premenopausal and postmenopausal women: a randomized trial, *Fertility and Sterility* (2015). [DOI: 10.1016/j.fertnstert.2015.06.010](#)

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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