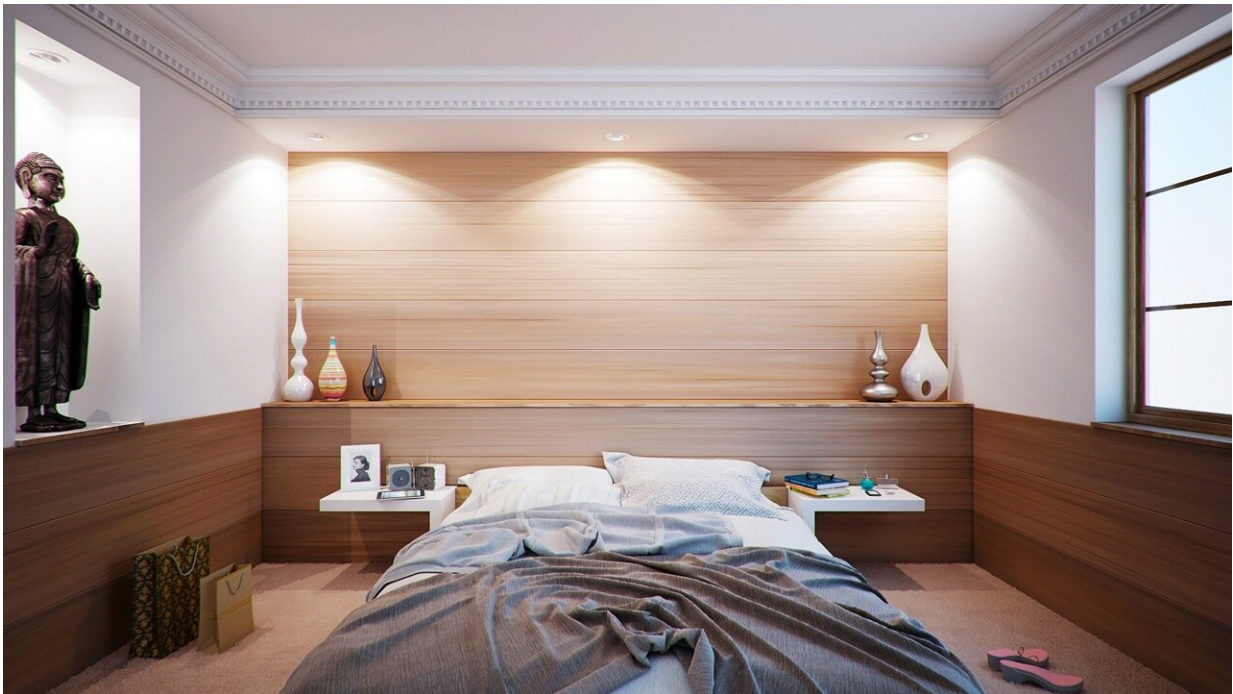


Study suggests PTSD symptoms can cause problems in the bedroom for midlife women

September 27 2023



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been associated with a number of adverse mental and physical health outcomes. Little is known, however, regarding its impact on sexual functioning among midlife women. A new study, presented at the [2023 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society](#) in Philadelphia, September 27–30, sheds light on the topic, suggesting that greater PTSD symptoms lead to worse sexual

functioning.

PTSD is more common among women than many people may believe, with approximately 10% of women reporting symptoms. The most common events leading to the development of PTSD include combat exposure, childhood physical abuse, and [sexual violence](#). Despite the high prevalence of PTSD in women, there has been little research done regarding the association between PTSD symptoms and sexual functioning among midlife women.

A new study involving more than 100 [postmenopausal women](#) 45–66 years of age sought to determine if PTSD symptoms were associated with worse sexual functioning among midlife women after accounting for potentially confounding factors, such as age, race/ethnicity, education, vaginal estrogen use, alcohol use, and depressive symptoms. To qualify, study participants had to have experienced PTSD symptoms and had sexual activity within the month prior to evaluation.

On average, women who reported moderate and severe PTSD symptoms also reported lower sexual functioning. When specific aspects of PTSD symptoms were considered, greater avoidance/numbing symptoms were related to poorer sexual functioning, causing the researchers to conclude that greater past-month PTSD symptomology was related to worse sexual functioning. Results suggest the importance of assessing and addressing PTSD symptoms among midlife women to improve their [sexual health](#) and functioning as they age.

Study results presented are part of a presentation entitled "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms and Sexual Functioning Among Midlife Women."

"Many midlife women experience profound changes in their mood, physical health, and [social relationships](#), in part related to the menopause

transition," says Dr. Karen Jakubowski, lead author from the Department of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh. "Currently, there is little research on the long-term health effects of PTSD symptoms, specifically among midlife women. Our results highlight the need to better understand women's trauma histories and PTSD symptoms in order to provide optimal clinical care for women during midlife."

"As women age, there are many reasons why sexual functioning may become an issue for them," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director for The Menopause Society. "This study highlights the need for health care professionals to ask about any history of trauma and open-up the dialog with their patients on this sensitive issue."

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

Citation: Study suggests PTSD symptoms can cause problems in the bedroom for midlife women (2023, September 27) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-ptsd-symptoms-problems-bedroom-midlife.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--