

## HEALTHY AGING

# How Your Sex Life Changes After 60

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Some people believe that [sex life after 60](#) is somehow less enjoyable or necessary than it was before. While adults over 60 may have sex less than they did in their 20s and 30s, there are few reasons why sex cannot be any less pleasurable or passionate than it ever was.

There may be adjustments that people over 60 need to make, but that is also true with diet, exercise, and other lifestyle changes that older adults need to make to maintain a high quality of life.

This article takes a closer look at what to expect from sex after 60, including the benefits to your health and emotional well-being. It also offers tips on how to keep your sex life active and enjoyable as you get older.

## Are Older People Having Sex?

According to the National Poll on Healthy Aging, 40% of people between the ages of 65 and 80 are sexually active. Of these, 73% say they are satisfied with their sex lives. Among those with spouses or partners, 54% said they were sexually active.<sup>1</sup>

Due to advances in healthcare and nutrition, adults today are living longer and better than ever. Problems that used to limit sexual activity in older adults, such as [erectile dysfunction](#) and [low libido](#) (sex drive), can now be treated medically or with counseling and changes in lifestyle.

## Frequency of Sex in Older Adults

As people age, they tend to have sex less frequently. This may be due to age-related hormonal changes, long-standing illnesses, and changed priorities, among other factors.<sup>2</sup>

A 2011 study of people ages 44 to 72 found that females had less sex after 60 because they were outliving their partners. Males over 60, on the other hand, had more sex. That is until they hit age 72, at which point their poorer physical health leads to a decline in sex frequency.<sup>3</sup>

According to the research:<sup>3</sup>

- Females reported having sex an average of 4.68 times per month between the age of 40 to 59, dropping to 1.74 times per month between the age of 60 to 72.

- Males reported having sex an average of 6.18 times per month between the age of 40 to 59, dropping to 3.13 times per month between the age of 60 to 72.

Interestingly, the introduction of [Viagra \(sildenafil\)](#) in 2010 had no impact on the frequency of sex in males who took the erectile dysfunction drug compared to those who didn't.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, studies show that while [menopause](#) affects sexual function in older females, it doesn't affect the frequency of sex when comparing women treated with [hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#) to those who were not treated.<sup>4</sup>

### [How Often Do Couples Really Have Sex?](#)

## Health Benefits of Sex After 60

It's time to put aside clichés that vigorous sex in older adults can be detrimental or even dangerous. There are numerous health benefits associated with an active sex life after age 60. These include:

- **Happiness:** A 2019 study from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine reported that sexual satisfaction in males corresponded to a greater life enjoyment score. By contrast, emotional intimacy involved with sex, rather than sex itself, translated to higher lifestyle enjoyment scores in females.<sup>5</sup>
- **Improved health:** A 2019 study from University College London suggested that a higher frequency of sex in older adults is linked to lower rates of cancer, coronary heart disease, and other chronic illnesses. This shouldn't suggest that having more sex will prevent these diseases, but it does illustrate the association between sexual activity and good health in older people.<sup>6</sup>
- **Less genital dryness:** More sex may contribute to better sex in older females. A 2011 study from the University of California, Los Angeles reported that a greater frequency of sex is linked to less genital dryness and [dyspareunia](#) (pain during sex).<sup>7</sup>
- **Better mental functioning:** A 2019 study from Coventry University in England found a direct association between higher frequencies of sex and higher levels of cognitive function in older adults, including memory, flexible thinking, self-control, verbal fluency, and visual-spatial processing ( the ability to tell where objects are in space).<sup>8</sup>

### [10 Health Benefits of Sex](#)

## Sex and Intimacy in Older Adults

Intimacy doesn't become any less important when you hit 60. With that said, the nature of intimacy can undoubtedly evolve.

Research suggests that sexual well-being in older adults is defined by five factors:<sup>9</sup>

- Physical intimacy

- Emotional closeness during sex
- Sexual compatibility
- Sexual satisfaction
- Distress related to sexual function problems

As people reach an older age, they tend to characterize sexual satisfaction within the context of these five factors.

More often, older adults put a higher priority on intimacy, bonding, and affection than on sex itself. Moreover, they tend to regard partnered sex as more intimate than sex with multiple or occasional partners.<sup>10</sup>

With that said, intimacy in the absence of sex does not translate to the same levels of satisfaction.

According to a 2020 study of around 3,800 older adults, the combination of intimacy and frequency of sexual intercourse corresponded to feelings of sexual well-being. The absence of either tended to reduce these feelings in both males and females.<sup>11</sup>

### [Top 10 Sex Tips for Males Over 60](#)

## Revitalizing Your Sex Life

There are several things you can do to keep your sex life alive as you get older. They all start by taking care of themselves. If you are not physically and emotionally healthy, it will be that much harder to remain sexually healthy.

### Diet and Exercise

If you eat healthily and exercise regularly, you'll almost always have more energy and a better sense of well-being. Both can improve your libido and sexual function.

Having [obesity](#) or being overweight affects sexual function even in young people. However, the impact tends to be greater in older adults due to higher rates of heart disease, respiratory disease, and other aging-related illnesses.<sup>12</sup>

By contrast, achieving and maintaining an ideal weight through diet and exercise can improve sexual function at almost any age.<sup>12</sup>

### Diet and Erectile Dysfunction

A 2020 study found that a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, and fish—and low in red and processed meats—was associated with a lower risk of erectile dysfunction. The study, which involved men between 40 and 75, found this association among all age groups.<sup>13</sup>

Among females, routine exercise is typically associated with improved sexual function during and after menopause. Specific activities, like [pelvic floor exercises](#), are seen to have a significant, direct impact on sexual function in older females.

## Treating Medical Issues

Older couples are commonly faced with issues that directly impact sexual function. These include erectile dysfunction, vaginal dryness and pain, and reduced libido.

Each can be treated in different ways:

- **Erectile dysfunction:** Treatment options include medications called [PDE5 inhibitors](#), which include Viagra and Cialis (tadalafil). [Penile vacuum pumps](#), [erection rings](#), and [penile implants](#) are also options.<sup>14</sup>
- **Vaginal dryness and pain:** Treatment options include [topical estrogen cream](#), vaginal estrogen suppositories, vaginal estrogen rings, non-hormonal vaginal lubricants, and a drug called Ospheña (ospemifene) that makes vaginal tissues thicker and less fragile.<sup>15</sup>
- **Low libido:** Treatment options include [testosterone replacement therapy](#), counseling, and changes in medications that may be causing or contributing to a reduced sex drive.

Speak with your primary care provider or gynecologist. You can also ask for a referral to a specialist called a [urologist](#) who specializes in disorders of the urinary and reproductive tracts.

### [Do I Need Sex Therapy?](#)

## Summary

Many people over 60 have an active sex life. Having a satisfying sex life can not only make you feel better about yourself and your relationship but may also reduce your risk of chronic illness, improve your memory and cognitive function, and even enhance your sexual function.

As people age, they tend to prioritize intimacy and emotional connection over sex. Even so, the frequency of sex remains vital to the sexual well-being of both older males and females.

Overcoming sexual dysfunction common in older adults can help keep your sex life alive. Speak with your healthcare provider about the options available to you.

### [The Best Sex Positions for People With Bad Backs](#)

## A Word From Verywell

Distress over changes in sexual function can put a strain on even the best of relationships. Keeping quiet about it rarely makes things better.

One of the ways to keep your sex life alive is to speak with your partner openly and honestly about any problems you may be having. It may not only help you find solutions but may also bring you closer together as a couple.

If you are single, it is also important to seek medical care if [sexual dysfunction is causing you anxiety](#). Keeping silent only increases the risk of isolation and depression.

With that said, being single and not having sex is great too if you are happy and well-adjusted. Not having sex doesn't mean that you are at greater risk of poor health. As long as you take care of your physical or emotional health, your outlook can be as bright as anyone else.

## 15 Sources

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