

Sex and Sitting: Unraveling the Keys to Cognitive Health in Older Adults

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In the golden years of life, the pursuit of cognitive health becomes paramount. Two recent studies provide unique insights into how older individuals can maintain their cognitive functions – one focusing on the role of sexual activity, and the other on the detrimental effects of sedentary behavior.

The Pleasure Principle: Sexuality and Cognitive Health

In a study published in *The Journal of Sex Research*, Shannon Shendi, Ph.D. in Sociology at Hop College, and her team discovered a compelling link between regular sexual activity, experiential pleasure, and improved cognitive function in older adults. The study analyzed data from 1,683 subjects aged 62 and above. They found that among those aged 75-90 years, engaging in sexual activity at least once a week was associated with better cognitive functions after five years. For the 62-74 age group, sexual satisfaction emerged as the key factor affecting cognitive function.

“Regular sexual behavior has potential benefits beyond cognition, including improved mood, cardiovascular health, and overall happiness,” says Shendi. But she adds a note of caution, warning that excessive sexual behavior could still affect interpersonal relationships or sleep.

Sit Less, Think More: Sedentary Behavior and Dementia Risk

Parallel research conducted at the University of Arizona painted a stark picture of the connection between sedentary behavior and the risk of dementia in older adults. Spending more than 10 hours a day engaged in sedentary activities, such as sitting, significantly increases the risk of dementia. This finding is especially notable considering that the average American is sedentary for about 9.5 hours each day.

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, analyzed data from the UK Biobank, with over 100,000 adults participating. The results suggested that it is the total time spent sedentary that drives the relationship between sedentary behavior and dementia risk, rather than how the sedentary time is accumulated throughout the day.

Conclusion: Balancing Pleasure and Activity

In conclusion, the key to cognitive health in older adults may lie in striking the right balance between pleasure and activity. Regular sexual activity and experiential pleasure, coupled with sexual satisfaction, can have a positive impact on cognitive health. However, over-indulgence, coupled with excessive sedentary behavior, can lead to cognitive decline.

These findings shed light on the importance of maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle in later years, underscoring the necessity not just for physical activity, but also for maintaining a satisfying sex life. As we grow older, it seems that staying physically active and emotionally satisfied is not just about enhancing our quality of life, but also about preserving our cognitive abilities.