



WHEN LUST GOES *Bust*

IS YOUR SEX LIFE LEAVING YOU LESS THAN INSPIRED? GET YOUR MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT BACK IN THE MOOD WITH THESE TIPS FROM SEX, RELATIONSHIP, AND NUTRITION EXPERTS.

by Patti Verbanas

REMEMBER FOREPLAY? Trying to “get it over with quickly” is the reason many women experience dissatisfaction with sex. No wonder they lack the desire to try again. “Without proper foreplay, the vaginal walls are not lubricated enough for pleasurable sex,” says Gloria Bachmann, M.D., Professor and Interim Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Her suggestion: “Before reaching for a vaginal lubricant, ask your partner to give you a massage with an aromatic body lotion instead.”

REDEFINE “SEX” “The equation is: ‘Sex equals pleasure,’ not ‘sex equals orgasm,’” says Christine Hyde, a certified sex therapist with

Winterberry Counseling in Chester, who outlines her program for better sex: “Take away the pressure of intercourse by putting the act on hiatus for at least three months. This is difficult to explain to the partner with higher desire since he already feels that the frequency is low. However, explain to him that this will help end mediocre sex. Redefine other acts such as French kissing and caressing as ‘sex.’ You’ll start to see ‘sex’ as the whole physical, intimate picture with your partner and realize that you’re having more sex than you think.”

EAT OYSTERS (AND OTHER ZINC-RICH FOODS) “Zinc is the most well-known nutrient that enhances libido,” says Jacqueline Gomes,

R.D., spokesperson for the New Jersey Dietetic Association. “The richest source is found in seafood, specifically oysters.” While oysters have a reputation for being an aphrodisiac, there is no real scientific proof correlating them to imminent sexual desire. Rather, it’s the fact that regular consumption will boost zinc — and thus your libido. Not a fan? Crimini mushrooms, spinach, asparagus, collard greens, pumpkin seeds, beef, lamb, and yogurt also are good sources.

MOVE IT, SISTER Regular exercise keeps you energized, increases stamina, and improves circulation. “It’s considered a natural aphrodisiac because it releases endorphins and helps to stimulate blood flow,” Gomes says. “Exercise increases testosterone — a hormone that influences interest, arousal, lubrication, and orgasm in women.” A bonus: It also combats the libido-crushing demon that is chronic stress.

GET CHATTY “Good communication brings a sense of control and peace, and increased affection,” says Bernie Bilicki, a psychologist and relationship counselor in Hillsborough. Learn to talk about sex — especially what you need. If you don’t ask, you won’t receive.

TEST YOUR BLOOD Ask your doctor to check your bio-available testosterone level. If it’s low, no amount of talking or therapy will help improve your desire, Hyde says. “Testosterone can be returned to the normal range through a prescribed medication called AndroGel,” she notes. “The gel is applied to the side of the thigh and can help increase desire in 24 to 48 hours.”

KISS DRY GOOD-BYE Especially during perimenopause and menopause, vaginal dryness could result in painful intercourse — and stop you cold. “See your doctor to rule out physical problems,” advises Nancy Phillips, a obstetrician-gynecologist in New Brunswick. “If you have chronic dryness, solutions range from the use of a lubricant before intercourse, to vaginal moisturizers applied on a prolonged basis, to estrogen replacement. You can also



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—CHRISTINE HYDE,
SEX THERAPIST

apply a lidocaine gel, a topical anesthetic, prior to intercourse to reduce pain.”

GET CIRCULATING A healthy cardiovascular system is essential for sexual pleasure, says Gomes. “Keep your circulatory system strong by eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, like mackerel, wild salmon, flaxseed, and walnuts, at least twice a week,” she says. “Fats are used to produce a variety of

hormones, so try to consume most of your fats from monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, such as olive oil, nuts, avocado, and fish. Conversely, a diet high in saturated fat can affect your risk of developing certain chronic illnesses that affect circulation, and clogged arteries will prevent adequate blood flow from reaching your genital area.”

KEEP UP THOSE KEGELS Maintaining the tone of your vaginal walls enhances orgasm, Hyde says. Kegel exercises are simple: Flex the muscles that stop urination and hold them for 10 seconds. Do two reps of 10 squeezes, twice a day. “If you do Kegels at the point of orgasm,” she notes, “it will be more intense.”

GIVE YOURSELF THE PERFECT PRESENT Women have the undermining habit of thinking about everything — chores, kids, dinner — but sex during sex. “Be in the moment,” Bilicki says, “and enjoy the experience.”

KNOW YOUR ABCS Vitamins A, B, and C are important for your vaginal health — and a strong vagina means less occurrences of painful intercourse, especially during menopause. “A vitamin B deficiency can weaken the production of sex hormones, such as estrogen, which are important for vaginal elasticity and lubrication,” says Gomes. “Antioxidant vitamins A and C help keep the external and internal lining of your vaginal tissue healthy. A diet rich in dark, leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, and collards, and brightly colored fruits such as oranges and cantaloupe, will give you adequate amounts of these vitamins.”

GET A HOBBY “Women who have pleasure in other aspects of their lives are more likely to experience sexual pleasure,” says Hyde. “So, if you are passionate about tennis, you are likely to be passionate about sex. I tell clients to start doing something they loved in the past. Sometimes it’s easier to take an activity that used to ignite passion and rekindle that first before attempting to reignite your sex life.” *