Low Sexual Desire

Patient Information · A concern when low desire bothers you

WARWIKI

Sexual desire is interest in sex. It can change over time. Low desire is worth discussing if it bothers you. People of any sex can ask for help.

What Can Affect Desire?

- **Medicines:** some antidepressants and other drugs.
- **Body changes:** menopause, low estrogen, pain with sex, or other health problems.
- **Daily life:** low mood, stress, poor sleep, or relationship strain.

What Happens at a Visit?

Your care team asks when the change began and how it affects you. They ask about medicines, pain, mood, sleep, health, and relationships. They may offer an exam if pain or a body change is part of the concern. Blood tests are used when a medical cause is suspected. A short questionnaire may help describe your symptoms, but a score alone is not a diagnosis.

Start With What Is Getting in the Way

- Treat pain or vaginal dryness when present.
- Review medicines with the person who prescribes them. **Do not stop an antidepressant on your own.**
- Sex therapy, talk therapy called CBT, mindfulness, or couples therapy can help some people.

Learn the Terms

Desire
Interest in sexual activity.

Distress
Feeling bothered by a change in desire.

CBT
Talk therapy that works on thoughts and habits.

Sex therapy
Care for sexual concerns, alone or with a partner.

Will a medicine fix it? Medicines help some people, but the average gain is small. Your care team can help choose a plan based on what bothers you and what else may be affecting desire.

Medicine Options

- **Flibanserin (Addyi)** is a pill taken at bedtime each day. It is approved for women under 65 whose low desire began after a time of usual desire and is present across situations. The low desire cannot be due to a health condition, relationship problem, or medicine. In studies, it added about **half a satisfying sexual event per month** over placebo, on average. Stop it after 8 weeks if it does not help.
- **Alcohol and flibanserin:** wait at least 2 hours after 1 or 2 drinks before the dose. Skip the dose after 3 or more drinks. After a dose, avoid alcohol until the next day. This drug can cause low blood pressure or fainting. It cannot be used with some other medicines or with liver disease.
- **Bremelanotide (Vyleesi)** is an injection used as needed for premenopausal women with the same type of low desire. It improved desire and distress scores in trials, but the number of satisfying sexual events did not differ from placebo. **Nausea affected about 4 in 10** users. It can raise blood pressure for a short time. It cannot be used with uncontrolled high blood pressure or known heart or blood vessel disease.
- **Testosterone for postmenopausal women** is used off-label for low desire that causes distress. Skin treatment is the studied route. Across trials, it added **less than one satisfying sexual event every 4 weeks** over comparison treatment, on average. Levels and side effects need checks. Long-term safety is unknown.
- **Testosterone for men** is considered when symptoms come with low levels confirmed on repeat morning blood tests. It may improve desire when testosterone is low.

Call your care team if:

- Low desire bothers you or a treatment is not helping
- A medicine causes dizziness or nausea
- Your temperature is **100.4 °F (38 °C)** or higher

Go to an emergency department if:

- You faint after taking flibanserin
- You cannot reach your care team and are worried about a serious medicine reaction

Three Things to Remember

1. Low desire is a problem if it bothers you.
2. Pain, medicines, mood, sleep, and relationships can matter.
3. Care can include treating a cause, therapy, or a medicine.