

## Low libido (sexual desire)

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Sex can be fun, exciting, and a time of intimate sharing. However, sex can also be a time of anxiety for either partner, especially when there is a sexual problem.

### What is low libido?

'Low libido' is the term used to describe a lack of interest in sexual activity. A combination of biological, personal and relationship factors affect sexual desire or libido. Sexual desire is different for each person and may change over time depending on what is happening in a person's life, and low libido may not be seen as a problem for some men. However, if a man loses interest in sex for no obvious reason, and he is worried about it, talking to a doctor may be helpful.

### What causes low libido?

Low libido can be caused by acute (short-term) or chronic (long-term) medical or psychiatric conditions, particularly depression. Men with low levels of testosterone (androgen deficiency) can have problems with low libido. Some men with low libido ask the doctor for testosterone treatment, even though most of these men will have a normal testosterone level. Testosterone treatment will not help to improve libido in men with normal testosterone levels. Prescription medicines, such as antidepressants and blood pressure medicines, as well as frequent alcohol or marijuana use can lower feelings of sexual desire.



Other factors that can affect libido include:

- stress or tiredness from work
- too little or too much exercise
- feelings of dissatisfaction with the relationship.

It is often difficult to separate how much a man's sexual interest is affected by physical or psychological factors, especially when there is chronic illness, chronic pain, fatigue or body image problems (e.g., following surgery for cancer).

### How is low libido diagnosed?

If a man loses interest in sex for no obvious reason a doctor will check the man to try to find the cause.

Checking a man with low libido might include:

- a medical history including medicine use
- a physical examination
- blood tests.

If low libido seems to be related to relationship issues, talking to a psychologist or counsellor may help to find the cause.

### How is low libido treated?

Antidepressants can be helpful if a man

is depressed, but they can also lower sexual interest.

If low libido is caused by androgen deficiency (low testosterone) that has been confirmed by a blood test, testosterone replacement therapy may be needed. Low libido related to stress or tiredness may be helped by stress management strategies or counselling.

Partner dissatisfaction is the most common reason for people seeking treatment for low libido. The 'identified patient' (the one who is less interested in sex) may seek treatment because their partner is frustrated, angry or resentful. This situation is sometimes called 'desire discrepancy'. Low libido often hides a desire for more non-sexual sharing and intimacy. Individual or couple counselling can be helpful to identify and address any relationship issues and improve sexual desire.

### Who can help a man with low libido?

The local doctor (GP) can help to identify the extent and cause of low libido. Depending on the likely cause, the doctor may refer to other professionals such as a sex therapist, a psychologist, an endocrinologist or a urologist.

For more information visit [www.andrologyaustralia.org](http://www.andrologyaustralia.org), call 1300 303 878, or speak to your doctor.

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