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**The
Menopause
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Leading the Conversation

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More Sex, Less Pain and Irritation for Perimenopausal and Postmenopausal Women

New study suggests that regular sexual activity may reduce the odds of vulvar pain, dryness, and irritation in women aged in their 40s to 70s; orgasm and satisfaction levels are not necessarily affected by age

CLEVELAND, Ohio (June 25, 2025)—It's no secret that women often become less interested in sex with age. However, orgasm and satisfaction have been shown to not decline significantly with age. A new study suggests regular sexual activity may limit vulvar pain, irritation, and dryness, which are all common reasons women have less sex as they get older. Results of the study are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The Menopause Society.

Estrogen deficiency during and after menopause may reduce the life expectancy of women and impair their quality of life through a condition called genitourinary syndrome of menopause (GSM). In 2014, GSM was defined as a collection of symptoms and signs associated with decreased estrogen and sex steroid levels. GSM includes genital, sexual and urinary symptoms—all of which can affect the frequency of sexual activity for women aged in their 40s to 70s.

In this new study involving more than 900 women aged 40 to 79 years, researchers sought to examine the association between sexual regularity and vulvovaginal-related problematic menopause symptoms. The vulva refers to the external female genitalia, and the vagina to the internal anatomy. Common problems experienced with menopause include itching, burning, pain, decreased lubrication, and changes in skin appearance.

Engaging in sexual activity in the past 3 months was defined as regular sexual activity, whereas engaging in sexual activity in the past year (but not in the past 3 months) was considered lower sexual activity. Not surprisingly, the researchers confirmed that the proportion of women having regular sexual activity decreased significantly with age, which aligns with the fact that Female Sexual Function Index scores for sexual desire, arousal, and lubrication also significantly decreased with age. The Female Sexual Function Index consists of 19 questions on female sexual function under six domains. Noteworthy, however, was that the scores for orgasm and satisfaction did not change with age.

Based on the results of the study, the researchers determined that some sexual functions and symptoms change with age but may be maintained in women who engage in more regular sexual activity. This study also revealed that women with regular sexual activity showed a low prevalence of GSM-related symptoms.

Study results are published in the article “Cross-sectional study of the association between regular sexual activity and sexual function and genitourinary syndrome of menopause-related symptoms.”

“The findings highlight the importance of diagnosing and treating GSM. Only 2.9% of the participants reported using hormone therapy. Local low-dose vaginal estrogen therapy is safe and highly effective at alleviating bothersome vulvovaginal symptoms contributing to pain and avoidance of intercourse. And although optimal sexual health is integral to overall well-being, it is also imperative to recognize the effect these symptoms can have on women who aren’t sexually active. Treatment should be offered to anyone with symptoms, whether engaging in sexual activity or not. Normalizing use of local low-dose estrogen therapy should be a thing,” says Dr. Monica Christmas, associate medical director for The Menopause Society.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

The Menopause Society is dedicated to empowering healthcare professionals and providing them with the tools and resources to improve the health of women during the menopause transition and beyond. As the leading authority on menopause since 1989, the nonprofit, multidisciplinary organization serves as the independent, evidence-based resource for healthcare professionals, researchers, the media, and the public and leads the conversation about improving women’s health and healthcare experiences. To learn more, visit menopause.org.