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**The  
Menopause  
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*Leading the Conversation*

**Contact:**

The Menopause Society

Ella Adams ([eadams@fallsandco.com](mailto:eadams@fallsandco.com))

Phone: (216) 696-0229

**Concerns About Sexual Function Persist Well Beyond Midlife**

*New study confirms that older women experience sexual dysfunction at similar rates as midlife women but report less sexual distress*

CLEVELAND, Ohio (August 13, 2025)—Adults aged 65 years and older are becoming the fastest-growing demographic, yet, the sexual health of older women is often understudied and untreated. A new study demonstrates their rate of sexual problems is similar to that of midlife women, although they are less likely to report distress related to their sexual problems. Results of the study are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The Menopause Society.

Although sexual activity declines with age, sexual health remains relevant throughout life and does not cease with the end of reproductive years, as demonstrated by the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN) in which more than 75% of middle-aged women reported that sex was important to them. Other studies have similarly shown that 37% of women aged older than 65 years and 10% aged older than 85 years remain sexually active.

The researchers believe the results of this latest study suggest that older women may feel uncomfortable discussing sexual concerns or lack awareness of effective treatments. They additionally speculated that the lack of related distress could reflect greater acceptance of age-related changes or lower expectations regarding sexual function. This aligns with previous research showing that aging is often linked to increased emotional resilience and overall emotional well-being.

Problems with sexual health are common, affecting 22% to 43% of women globally. Female sexual dysfunction (FSD) is defined as a clinically significant disturbance in sexual response or pleasure that persists for at least 6 months and causes personal distress. Despite the growing population of older women, data on sexual health and FSD in women aged 65 years and older remain sparse. Most research focuses on middle-aged populations or combines data from men and women.

This newest study involving nearly 3,500 sexually active women aimed to examine sexual health concerns, sexual function, and related distress in sexually active women aged 65 years and older and compare them with those of women aged 50 to 64 years. Among other things, the study found that older women were less likely to report loss of sexual desire and reduced genital sensation. In addition, although older women experienced FSD at similar rates as midlife women, they reported less sexual distress.

Survey results are published in the article "Understanding the sexual concerns of older women presenting for care to women's health clinics: a cross-sectional study."

"This study showed that, despite older women reporting sexual dysfunction at similar rates as their midlife female counterparts, they reported less distress about their sexual problems. It is important to address sexual health concerns at any age, and this study highlights the need to continue screening for and

managing sexual health concerns throughout a woman's entire lifespan," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director for The Menopause Society and one of the authors of the study.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit [www.menopause.org](http://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](http://menopause.org).