

The Effects of Aging on Intimacy

By Staff Editor

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(HealthNewsDigest.com) - Melville, NY, January 30, 2015- If you talk to the typical "healthy" single senior, you will be surprised to learn he/she is sexually active, performing at least two to three times a month, which is similar to the frequency of many younger couples.

Based upon studies documented in the New England Journal of Medicine, the statistics broken down by age group show: 73% of those 57 - 64 years old; 53% of people ages 64 to 75; and 26% of people between the ages of 75 to 85 are having sexual intercourse. As seniors continue to participate in sexual relationships, many are faced with medical conditions that inhibit or make sexual activity more difficult.

"Sexual relations can be challenging at any age due to health and emotional factors, but seniors can face more obstacles than their younger counterparts," said [Dr. Deepak A. Kapoor](#) president of [Advanced Urology Centers of New York](#), the largest independent provider of urology services in the United States.

When asked what some of these issues are, Dr. Kapoor said erectile dysfunction, urinary tract infections, stress incontinence and sexually transmitted diseases are among some of the problems, which may impact healthy intimate relations among seniors.

Erectile Dysfunction (ED)

Erectile dysfunction affects an estimated 30 million men in the United States and is commonly defined as the inability to achieve and or maintain an erection.

A reduction in the blood flow within the penis, resulting from factors such as depression or side effects from medications including diuretics, antidepressants, antihistamines, or non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, can cause erectile dysfunction.

Erectile dysfunction may also be a sign of more serious health issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease. It can also result from atherosclerosis (the hardening of the arteries which leads to heart attack, stroke or peripheral vascular disease), hormone imbalances or even neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease.

"I advise anyone experiencing ED to schedule an appointment with his doctor," said Dr. Kapoor. "Erectile dysfunction could be a symptom of a more serious illness requiring treatment."

Urinary Tract Infections

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) occur when bacteria seeps into the urinary tract through the urethra and travels into the bladder, kidneys, or ureters. Typically, menopausal women are likely to be affected by UTIs due to changes in the vaginal lining. The decrease in estrogen causes a loss in protection from these types of bacteria and use of vaginal estrogen cream and sprays can also lead to UTIs.

Each type of urinary tract infection has a specific set of signs and symptoms. For example, in kidney infections (acute pyelonephritis), patients may experience back pain, fever, chills, nausea and vomiting. Infections in the bladder (cystitis) may cause lower abdominal pain, painful urination, or blood in the urine. In the urethra, infections can produce a burning sensation during urination.

"If a patient presents with any of these symptoms, their doctor will perform a urinalysis (urine culture) to determine if there is an infection," says Dr. Kapoor. "A cystoscopy may also be performed to check inside the urethra and bladder. If there are traces of bacteria, oral antibiotics will be prescribed."

Stress Incontinence

The stretching or weakening of the pelvic floor muscles resulting from prior pelvic surgeries, menopause or childbirth can cause stress incontinence. This allows urine to leak out of the bladder and can cause women to discharge urine during intimacy.

To diagnose stress incontinence, urine samples will be tested for blood, and physical exams and/or urinary stress tests will be performed. Treatment plans will be created based upon previous medical history, current weight, and condition of the bladder.

Depending on the severity of the stress incontinence, kegel exercises (pelvic floor muscle strengthening exercises), scheduled toilet trips, or avoidance of caffeinated drinks may be viable treatment options. Surgery would only be utilized for cases of stress incontinence that involve prolapsed bladders, urethras needing support or weak sphincters.

Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD)

There have been an alarming number of sexually transmitted diseases diagnosed among seniors in recent years. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, chlamydia infections among Americans more than 65 years old rose by 31 percent while syphilis cases increased by 52 percent in the same age group.

"This is due to the fact that seniors are having unprotected sex," said Dr. Kapoor. "Although the vast majority of seniors can't get pregnant, it's important that they practice safe sex to avoid contracting an STD."

Have Abnormal Symptoms?

"It's important for seniors to seek medical advice to avoid complications and enjoy sexual relations well into their golden years," said Dr. Kapoor. "We see many patients in this age group, and most times these medical issues can be alleviated with the correct diagnosis and treatment plan."

To learn more about Advanced Urology Centers of New York: call [516-931-0041](tel:516-931-0041) or visit www.aucofny.com.