

New Supplement May Restore Women's Sex Drive

If your love life isn't what it used to be, you're not alone. It's estimated that over 40% of women experience some form of sexual dysfunction. Now there may be a simple cure for a low libido.

A study from the Stanford University School of Medicine suggests a simple amino acid can improve a woman's sexual desire and overall satisfaction. Researchers found arginine works to increase levels of nitric oxide in the body and is potentially a signal molecule for sexual arousal. Their research showed arginine did significantly improve women's sexual desire and overall satisfaction.

"There are a lot of herbal supplements that are marketed for sexual functioning, but to our knowledge, this is the only nutritional supplement for women that has any clinical testing behind it," says study author Dr. Mary Lake Polan.

In a double-blind placebo study, 93 women ages 22-73 enrolled as participants lacking in sexual desire. Of the women involved, 46 received the nutritional supplement and 47 received a placebo (dummy pill). The participants used the Female Sexual Function Index questionnaire to rate their level of sexual functioning before starting the study and after taking either a placebo or the supplement.

At the end of 4 weeks, 62% of the active group reported improved satisfaction with their overall sex life, compared to 38% in the placebo group. In the active group, 64% reported improvement in their level of sexual desire, compared to 43% in the placebo group.

With no negative side effects reported, arginine is clearly an option for some women, according to Polan. But it is not a panacea. Women should always talk to their doctor openly about their health, she advises. There are physical conditions that should be managed medically and relationship issues that can be addressed by counseling, so it is important to have a full evaluation by a professional. "We still don't have a magic bullet," Polan notes. "But arginine does give women more choices.

Polan spoke with the *Early Show* from our Washington bureau where she presented her findings at the 9th Annual Congress on Women's Health and Gender-Based Medicine. She is professor and chairman of the department of gynecology and obstetrics at the Stanford University School of Medicine. Polan says it's about time the medical community started looking into women's sexual health.