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Ask the Naturopath: Herbs for Your Love Life!

Yes, it has been a long winter, so let's spice it up a bit! We get a lot of questions on herbs and other natural remedies for libido, overall drive and energy, erectile dysfunction, self-esteem in the bedroom, and more. If you've been reading 'Ask the Naturopath' over the past several months, you are probably accustomed to our comfortableness with delicate topics, so here we go.

Natural remedies are great because they bring balance without harsh side effects while also working on the root nutritional and emotional imbalances which lead to unwanted symptoms. When a person lacks libido, they can get an evaluation from their health care professional about how well their glandular system is functioning. The hormones to check include estrogen (for women), of which we make three types, progesterone, the thyroid hormones, the adrenal hormones, as they can make other needed hormones when necessary, and finally, testosterone! Any of these hormones that are out of balance from stress, lack of proper nutrition, or overall body toxicity can lead to a lack of sex drive.

For some reason, we get the mental impression that we just crank out hormones like a factory at full steam. For a little perspective, women only produce one teaspoon of estrogen in their entire lifetime. Maybe, this is why taking synthetic doses of it over a long period of time proves problematic for many women. Additionally, these synthetics are made from horse urine!

Herbs that are phyto-forms of estrogen, meaning once they are consumed, they have all the necessary components the body needs to make estrogen, include Black Cohosh, Blue Cohosh, and Licorice Root to a lesser degree; however, Black Cohosh is the preferred choice. Those who have vaginal dryness and lack of drive can do well with one of these herbs.

Progesterone gives one energy, balances moods, reduces PMS symptoms, and is best found in the herb Wild Yam or progesterone creams made from Wild Yam. There are other foods and herbs that contain progesterone qualities but in much lower concentrations.

The thyroid in natural health is referred to as the 'third ovary,' and we find it essential to overall body energy, endurance and, yes, sex drive! When a person is stressed out or low on energy, then, let's face it... there is no energy for "extra" activities; it's all about just getting through the day. Also, when the thyroid is underactive, we tend to put on weight, and for women, this is a big challenge to self-esteem in general but especially in the bedroom. Men have plenty of challenges with their thyroid as well, and we like to use liquid nutritional iodine to support the thyroid when necessary.

The adrenals produce a wonderful hormone with a big long name; today, we will refer to it as DHEA, and it has a lot to do with anti-aging, energy, and mood, and we have used it very successfully for clients with low-sex drives, so much so that when one partner uses it in a blend for females, you can bet a few weeks later the husband will be in for the male version of the formula to keep up with her. Wow! Now, that's a good problem to have.

Next, we have testosterone which is needed in very small amounts by women and, naturally, a bit more for men. Usually, when a woman tests low in this hormone, taking the DHEA for the adrenals will balance testosterone needs for her. Herbal remedies that help one make testosterone include Yohimbe and Horny Goat Weed (it's not hard to imagine how that herb got its name).

When the hormones are in balance, we have a lot more energy. Now, what about those other factors like stress? Most of us will admit we are a bit stressed, and what are we doing about it? First of all, a good B-complex is very nourishing to the nerves; next, consider a good night's sleep helped by essential oil blends like Peace and Calming, Valor, or Roman Chamomile. Herbs like Kava Kava can also be very helpful. These remedies are also great during the day and do not cause drowsiness, just calmer nerves.

One of the more discouraging problems for a couple can be erectile dysfunction. We find herbs to be helpful here; however, the best results come from focusing on supporting the circulatory system and working on the low back, especially the sacrum (located just above the tailbone). When the sacrum is locked up from a lifestyle or occupation that is hard on the low back, this area loses flexibility and proper nerve flow. This, in turn, reduces blood flow and function to the male reproductive system. Consider Cranial Sacral therapy for help, along with some good nutritional changes that support circulation. Remedies can include Vitamin E, Ginseng, and Capsicum. Also, consider the amino acid L-Arginine; it is necessary to create nitric acid, which is absolutely essential for an erection to occur. By the way, Arginine is commonly found in combination with that Horny Goat Weed. Imagine that!

Finally, remember you are beautiful, and stop comparing yourself to the past or to others. You are wonderful, just the way you are. We use flower remedies to balance the emotions of low self-esteem. Larch gives one confidence in themselves in all areas of life. Borage helps one to have more courage. Pretty Face reminds us to focus on our inner beauty, and Bleeding Heart helps us to heal our relationship hurts, past or present. Please see a Natural Health Professional before beginning any concentrated supplementation program.

Intimacy is a gift; sex is only a part of it. Be romantic, smile, encourage each other, and give a back rub from time to time.