

## LET'S TALK ABOUT LIBIDO!

You might be surprised to learn we talk about libido a lot at our Happy Hormone Cottages! In fact, libido-or lack thereof-is in the top 3 issues that motivate women to come and see us. It ranks right up there with sleep issues and losing weight. So what's the deal? Here's the skinny on libido for women:

Most women over the age of 35, with waning progesterone levels, begin with sleeping issues, among other things. Progesterone is the hormone responsible for sleep, anxiety, mood, and other health factors. So when our progesterone levels begin to decrease, we see hormone imbalance issues beginning, with sleep problems becoming predominant. Here is what I know-TIRED WOMEN DO NOT WANT SEX! In addition, I don't know many women who aren't really busy. We seem to be multitasking experts who always put ourselves last on our own list. So by the time we hit our mid 30's and beyond, our adrenal glands are exhausted to the point of adrenal fatigue. This contributes to our lack of energy and overall fatigue. Sleeping issues, anxiety, and adrenal fatigue all negatively impact libido. Again, tired women do not want sex! So our first line of defense in healing libido is replenishing depleted progesterone levels AND healing exhausted adrenal glands! We also look at thyroid and do the full 4-point thyroid check where we look at thyroid levels in blood spot in the areas of free t3, free t4, tsh and tpo. Since most conventional practitioners and even endocrinologists check just t4 and tsh, this full spectrum analysis is important. Many women with fatigue, weight issues, foggy thinking, dry skin and thinning hair are on synthroid or levothyroxine and are feeling no better. When they visit their doctors for help, they are told to either double the dose or cut the dose in half with no results. When we finally check their full thyroid panel, we can address their low free t3 or high tpo (thyroid peroxidase antibody) and begin a plan of attack. This attention to the CAUSE of the thyroid issue is critical to be able to fix the issue. When we accurately assess and repair thyroid issues, just like we do with adrenal issues and hormone imbalance, women begin to sleep better, have more energy and a general feeling of overall well-being. All of this positively impacts libido!

In addition, testosterone can also play a part in libido for women, as well as men! So measuring testosterone levels to make sure we have optimal levels is important. We like to check testosterone in blood spot, where the hormones reside at the tissue level of cells and the ranges are very specific: between 16-55 for women. However, measuring testosterone levels isn't the only thing we look at. I have worked with women who have a testosterone level of 88 with virtually no libido and women with a testosterone level of 13, with a high libido. So what gives? Obviously, for women, libido is more than just a measure of one's testosterone level. What I have found to be true in positively impacting low libido in women is this: when we can go in and fix the hormone imbalance issues with customized bioidentical hormone replacement therapy in ALL 3 areas: estradiol, progesterone and testosterone, where the hormone therapy is created for EACH woman based on her individual existing hormone levels, and we can adjust dosing as needed to fix the cause AND the symptoms so each woman is back to her optimal physiologic hormone levels; when we have healed her exhausted adrenal glands, and addressed any existing yet undetected thyroid issues, it is possible to restore women's sense of

well-being. This sense of well-being seems to have a positive impact on libido.

It also helps libido when women own their journey to their best health naturally and are willing to make the necessary lifestyle changes in both diet and exercise so they can feel their best. We recommend eating clean and working with a personal trainer at least 3 times a week. If this isn't possible, then doing resistance training, elevating the heart rate several times a week, and yoga, among other forms of exercise, all have long term benefits on health. When women feel better, not only in general, but about themselves and have a positive self-image as well as a positive body image, this also impacts libido.

Finally, in speaking with women all day, every day, here is what I know. Women with the greatest chance of regaining libido are the ones who are willing to do what it takes to feel better by owning their journey to their best health naturally, working on restoring natural hormone balance, eating healthy, and working out. They are positively handling the stress in their lives, have a healthy body image, and work at staying connected with their partner. For women, communication and affection are key in maintaining that intimacy in a relationship. This ranks right up there with trusting their partner. I have found if we do what it takes to heal our bodies and take care of ourselves, libido typically comes back in about 8 months. When women gasp as I tell them it will take at least 8 months to bring libido back, I always ask the question, "How long has your libido been missing?" When the answer is several years (!), it is not unreasonable to give it about 8 months to return. I do find it interesting that when we approach our doctors with libido issues, about the only thing we come out of their office with is an rx for an antidepressant. Did you know that not much else kills libido as quickly as an antidepressant? Again, I hesitate to go the conventional drug therapy route for libido. It just doesn't work. Of course, neither does being told that we are getting older and this is just the way it is. I don't agree with this, as we have women every day who are healing and making the long trip back from despair to happiness!