



How can I rev up my sex drive?

Reclaim your flagging desire with these natural libido boosters.

✦ **A holistic gynecologist says:** Libido is complex and not amenable to any one fix. It's affected by every hormonal system in your body and touches on many layers of human experience, including stress, spirituality, love and everything in between.

Treatment: Being busy and over-scheduled can damage our erotic lives, largely due to the negative effects of cortisol (a stress hormone known to block certain sex-hormone receptors and contribute to fatigue). So it's crucial to manage stress by taking the time to meditate and exercise.

In terms of your relationships, you need to look at a whole scope of issues: communication and intimacy, sexual variety, frequency of sex and differences in style between you and your partner. All of these areas should be continually explored and renegotiated.

— Sara Gottfried, M.D., founder and medical director of the Gottfried Center for Integrative Medicine in Oakland, Calif.

✦ **A dietitian says:** What you eat plays a major role in your sexual health. But it's not just about eating libido-boosting foods before sex—sticking with a vibrant, balanced diet over the long term is crucial.

Treatment: Zinc is essential for the release of hormones, so eat zinc-rich foods, such as chicken, oysters, crab, fortified cereal, cashews and chickpeas regularly. Dark chocolate (with a high cocoa content) and omega-3 fatty acids might help as well. Foods that improve circulation are also key, because they help move blood toward the genital area: Think spicy stuff like chili peppers and curries. Avoid eating heavy, fatty meals before sex. Because fat takes longer to break down, your blood must travel to your stomach to help digest it—and anything that draws blood away from the genital area can negatively affect libido.

— Michelle Dudash, R.D., Gilbert, Ariz.-based nutrition and culinary consultant

✦ **An herbalist says:** For some women with low libidos, an underlying health problem like depression or fatigue might be to blame. But in other cases, certain herbs can help address hormonal imbalances and energy issues that might decrease sex drive.

Treatment: Reach for maca, a libido-enhancing root plant native to Peru and said to nourish the endocrine glands, which are responsible for producing and releasing hormones. Powdered maca tastes really good, so you can add it to smoothies or hot drinks. Start with one-half teaspoon a day; increase your dosage by another half teaspoon if one isn't having the desired effect. You can also add a tincture of ashwagandha to maca drinks. Many women with low libido complain of extreme tiredness; ashwagandha, which acts as an adaptogen, builds energy and stamina.

— Margi Flint, author of *The Practicing Herbalist* and founder of *EarthSong Herbs* in Marblehead, Mass.