



On the nose ▶ Libido enhancers a little spray of sunshine?

You know the billboards – “Men, do it for longer”, “Want longer lasting sex?” – and that TV ad in which the sergeant from *A Country Practice* arrests a man for premature ejaculation. Annoying, right? Well, Advanced Medical Institute (AMI), the company behind the \$1mil-a-month advertising assault spruiking a nasal spray to treat PE and erectile problems, is now turning its attention to the ladies...

THE CLAIM

In July last year, AMI announced its pre-clinical trial on an apomorphine-based nasal inhaler to treat women's low libido. (Apomorphine stimulates dopamine.) It claimed “more than 70 per cent of female patients experienced orgasm after using the new treatment”. But the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has no record of the pre-clinical trials. Dr Darren Russell, president of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians' chapter of Sexual Health Medicine, is unaware of research into apomorphine treatment for female low libido. “The most likely effect it would have is to make a woman feel nauseous,” he told the *Sydney Morning Herald* in May.

“Small trials were done by AMI,” explains Dr Catherine Berry, a medical consultant for AMI. “Legally it is all OK; doctors are allowed to put formulas together of medications that are TGA-approved.”

THE CONTROVERSY

The idea that a spray can “fix” women's low libido gets sex therapists pretty fired up. “Will a nasal spray fix a bad relationship? Will it sort out work stress or sick kids?” says therapist Dr Vivienne Cass, author of *The Elusive Orgasm* (\$29.99, Rockpool). “There isn't a woman who hasn't, at some point, lost interest in sex. It's normal, but the medical profession insists on making even a month's loss of interest a medical condition,” says Dr Cass. In the Australian Study of Health and Relationships, 54.8 per cent of females reported a lack of interest in sex, 28.6 per cent didn't orgasm and 27.3 per cent didn't

enjoy sex for at least a month in the previous year. If that's dysfunctional, there are *lots* of messed-up women around.

“We're not saying low libido isn't a psychological issue, but we don't go into the causes,” responds Dr Berry. “We do give support, but we're not giving counselling. If it's appropriate, we'll say, go to a counsellor.”

There's doubt any of these “cures” work. In a study by Monash University in Victoria, funded by a US drug company, 814 women were given either a testosterone stomach patch or a placebo. After six months, those on the male-hormone patch enjoyed an extra two satisfying experiences a month, compared with 0.7 among the placebo group. Not an earth-shattering difference. PS: 19 per cent of the women treated with testosterone reported increased hair growth. And when researchers trialed a “female Viagra”, they noted increased blood flow to the nether regions of treated women as they watched erotic videos. But the women didn't report any increased interest in sex.

THE CONCLUSION

Spend your coin on a holiday rather than some snake oil. Women who report a lack of interest in sex, Dr Cass reckons, don't often have good work/play balance. “Make an attempt to include play in your life – and that includes sex,” she says. “We know that if you give women a placebo, 40 per cent of them will experience an improvement in their sex life. If you focus more on your sexuality and less on your to-do list, you'll feel more turned-on and interested.” That's just a start, but at least it won't put hairs on your chest.



Bedroom antics WITH JACQUELINE HELLYER

He's dreaming

My boyfriend just revealed a fantasy that freaked me out. What should I do?

CF, Currumbin, Qld

▶ Sex is like food – there's a smorgasbord of possibilities and we'll like some options and be repulsed by others. If the fantasy's one your boyfriend's happy to keep in his head rather than acting it out, that could be fine. But if it's something he wants to try, definitely tell him you're not into it. If you were vego you wouldn't eat meat to please him, so don't do anything sexual that freaks you out.

Career low

My husband's stressed at work and he can't get an erection. Solution, please!

SS, Prahran, Vic

▶ Create an environment that makes sex relaxing. Be gentle with him and give him time to relax. Shower him with cuddles and kisses, play soft music, massage his face, cup his balls in your hands. If he doesn't manage an erection, let him know that's OK. Frustrating as it is for you, if it's stress-related, his erection will improve when the stress goes.



Hold his nuts

Bringing sex back

I'm ready to get back in the saddle after divorce. How do I get confident about having sex with someone new?

MB, St Ives, NSW

▶ As one of my clients in this situation said: “I feel like an experienced virgin!” So yes, you'll probably find the first time most intimidating. Make sure it's comfortable – choose someone nice enough to help you through the “first time” (be upfront about it, he'll be flattered). Keep your expectations low (you may not orgasm) and enjoy the experience of discovering a new body.

*Jacqueline Hellyer is a sex coach and therapist, the author of *Sex Secrets for Busy People*, and the Men's Health sex coach. To ask her a question*, go to yahoo7.com.au/womenshealth, and include your initials, suburb and state.*

Got a minute? Remove a stuck ring: wrap your finger, from ring to nail, tightly with dental floss; the ring will slide off the glossy surface.*

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