

NAVIGATE YOUR LIFE

WINTER LOVIN'

Frosty weather chills sex drives. But it's possible to beat your biology – and hers – with these simple tricks for your hottest June ever

BY JONATHAN THOMPSON



1 The problem: you are biologically programmed to lose your sex drive in cold weather.

You can thank our ancestors' hibernation patterns for your winter libido drop, a University of Tasmania study found. "Hibernation caused their metabolisms to slow and sex drives to wane, as they increased their kilojoule load and slept more," says the study's co-author, Dr Margaret Austen. Thanks a lot, Darwin!

The solution: trick your body into thinking it's still summer by investing in the correct light bulb.

Although Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is rare in Australia, the grey weather and early darkness can make your home gloomy and depressing, helping bring on the winter blues. While splashing out on a pricey light-therapy box is one way of upping your mood, we can't help but think that sitting in front of a light box isn't the best way of creating an uplifting vibe between you and your girl.

Instead, fit your house with full-spectrum energy-saving light bulbs. In a study of SAD patients by Dr Norman E. Rosenthal, clinical professor of psychiatry at Georgetown Medical School in the US and the author of *Winter Blues*, participants who spent time under full-spectrum light felt considerably better, while those exposed to normal artificial light showed no improvement. The bulbs (\$48.50; viva-lite.com.au) are also environmentally friendly and cut your electricity bill, giving you two more reasons to smile.

For a boost on the go, slap the BluWave application on your iPhone. Studies in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* found simple blue light is twice as effective as white light at treating light disorders.

Don't: cheer yourself up with alcohol.

Studies published in the *American Journal of Physiology* have found that drinking alcohol affects your body's "master clock" and disrupts your energy levels further.

2 The problem: cold weather dulls sexual sensations.

Lower body temperatures dampen arousal for both men and women. "If your skin is warmer, it's more sensitive," says Dr Ian Kerner, sexual therapist and the author of *She Comes First*. "Most men will notice that when they get cold, their penis will shrink," says Kerner. See, you're not the only one.

The solution: it's a great excuse to take off someone else's clothes.

Nothing heats you up faster than someone else's body heat, according to University of Illinois studies. "Plus, skin-to-skin contact boosts the levels of oxytocin – the feel-good hormone, so acts as an aphrodisiac," says Kerner. Bonus points: nude sleeping means no struggling with her bra clasp.

Don't: take her socks off.

Women are 30 per cent more likely to orgasm if they keep their feet warm, discovered Dutch scientists from the University of Groningen.

3 The problem: winter weight gain saps your sex drive.


There's a biological reason why your summer six-pack is buried under winter's spare tyre. Studies by researchers at Indiana University have found that men pile on a minimum of one kilogram over winter because cold weather makes you want to eat more. Unfortunately for you, a US study by Duke University showed that gaining weight kills libido and makes men and women less sexually adventurous.

The solution: boost levels of happiness and sex hormones with pizza.

Studies published in medical journal *The Lancet* have shown that levels of mood-boosting chemical serotonin are lowest in winter and highest on bright, sunny days. However, according to University of North Carolina studies, it's possible to replicate the summer

serotonin boost by eating smarter. The scientists found that serotonin is manufactured from protein-rich foods and its release is triggered by carbohydrates. And that smells to us like a meat-feast pizza. Don't forget the plonk: Italian scientists from the University of Florence reported that women who drank wine with their meals had higher sex drives and reported stronger orgasms.

Don't: try to give your libidos a boost by eating chocolate.

Although a few squares of quality 70 per cent cocoa chocolate can have a positive effect on mood, the cheaper sugary stuff will work against you. Scientists from St. Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin found that eating a sugary snack can temporarily lower testosterone levels, which, in turn, can sap your sex drive, whatever your sex. 



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4 The problem: women are more prone to “the winter blues” and loss of libido.

It’s not just your cold feet that are causing her to keep her fleecy PJs on – according to UK-based health-advice service NHS Direct, twice as many women as men report a winter-induced lack of sex drive and increased depression.

The solution: switch birth control methods.

Finally, a happy ending: studies by US scientists at Albany State University found that women whose partners didn’t use condoms were less likely to experience depression. The researchers think it’s because semen contains positive mood-altering substances.

Don’t: try this with someone other than your long-term partner.

STIs are on the rise. According to the Australian Herpes Management Forum, one in eight adults carry the genital herpes virus and 80 per cent of people infected with it don’t know they are because they’re unaware of the symptoms or don’t experience any. Always use protection, unless you and your partner have both had an STI test.

5 The problem: you produce fewer sex hormones in winter.

Testosterone takes a nosedive in the winter and early spring, according to the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. One of the reasons behind this could be because babies conceived at this time would be born in autumn when, historically, food rations were low.

The solution: get more sleep.

Sleeping for longer allows the body to produce more testosterone. If you can’t sleep more, sleep smarter. If your alarm wakes you in a deep-sleep cycle, you’ll feel sluggish for hours, so invest in the Philips Wake-Up Light alarm clock with iPod dock (\$197; amazon.com), which gently increases light for a natural awakening.

Don’t: resort to an energy drink.

Scientists at the Sleep Research Centre in the UK found men who sipped an energy drink were significantly more lethargic and had more trouble concentrating an hour later.



SEX COACH

Jacqueline Hellyer boosts your bedroom know-how

Q *My girl and I had a threesome when we were drunk. Now she’s really upset with me because she said I shouldn’t have let it happen. I thought she wanted it to. How do I handle this?* – CL

A When you want to try something as confronting as a threesome, it’s important that you proceed with caution. Making these decisions while drunk should be avoided – it’s like going skydiving without any prep. Dangerous!

You claim you thought she wanted it, but you clearly hadn’t discussed it prior to this drunken occasion, so her claim that you shouldn’t have let it happen is valid. I suspect you couldn’t believe your luck and went ahead without considering if she was sober enough to make an informed decision. Though I’m sure your judgment was also clouded by alcohol.

The two of you need to talk about your fantasies and how you could gently, slowly and safely explore those new areas together.



Q *I’m 40 and my wife (of 12 years) is 32. We have two children. Lately, when I initiate sex, I’m treated like a sex maniac. We only do it twice a month and the lack of sex is driving me mad. Help.* – WB

A The two of you need to spend more time chilling out together and connecting, so that when you do initiate sex, it feels like it comes out of a sense of connection and desire rather than an imposition out of the blue.

She’s probably feeling pressured and, therefore, is pulling back even further. My first suggestion to you is to set aside one evening a week just for the two of you to hang out together and reconnect. Once the kids are in bed, just chill: no housework, no computers, no TV – just a glass of wine and the two of you. You need to give her the space to want you.

Agree that you won’t pressure her for sex on other nights. Then, on your chosen nookie night, allow her to relax, enjoy your company and build the desire to make love to you. For more advice, read my article, “Sex for Busy People”, in March’s *Men’s Health*.

Jacqueline Hellyer is a sex coach and author (jacquelinehellyer.com). Got a question for her? Log onto yahoo7.com.au/menshealth.

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