

HEAT UP YOUR LOVE LIFE WITH NATURAL HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS by Ellen Kamhi, Ph.D. R.N.



I'm dedicating this month's column to my Aunt Lil, who just passed away at 103! Right to the end, she was vibrant and sophisticated, and stayed up with all the latest news and politics. Last time I saw her, Aunt Lil said, "at any age, it's great to have a lover, even though as we age the mind is still willing, but the body loses ability!" Unfortunately, in the United States, between 40 and 50 percent of women, and 20 to 25 percent of men have a low sex drive. This number increases with age, especially for men. This is caused by factors that many people experience at some point in their lives, including: stress, poor nutrition (usually involving an overabundance of empty calories and junkfood), anxiety and depression, low self esteem, menopause and andropause (male menopause), fatigue and prescription drugs (many prescription drugs decrease sex drive, along with a host of other negative side effects).

When Viagra hit the market, it quickly became one of the best-selling drugs of all time, indicating the current interest in sexual enhancement. Both men and women are reevaluating their lifestyles, looking for ways to keep the sexual aspect of life juicy and vital. While Viagra and Hormone Replacement Therapy hold promise for rejuvenation, people who use these drugs run the risk of serious side effects, sometimes even fatal ones.

In my book, "The Natural Guide to Great Sex," I discuss a range of natural alternatives to pharmaceutical drugs commonly used to support sex drive, including HRT (hormone replacement therapy) and Viagra. Natural remedies have been used throughout human history to stave off the effects of aging. Ancient texts from China and India as well as the mystical Jewish teaching of Kabbala, offer specific herbs, foods, exercises and techniques that can be incorporated easily into our modern routine. Many of these have held up to the rigors of scientific scrutiny, as well as being proven by thousands of years of documented traditional use. In this article, we'll discuss some of the foods and herbs that can be helpful.

Several foods have gained a reputation as sexual enhancers: Asparagus is high in vitamin E. An obviously "phallic" shape, it's considered a 'happy' food in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Steam asparagus and share it with your lover. Almonds enhance the level of sex supportive magnesium and Omega 3 fatty acids. You can imagine why the Aztecs called the avocado tree Ahuacuati, which means "testicle tree." Avocados are a great source of good oils needed for the production of sex hormones. Banana fruits as well as flowers have strong sexual symbology. Bananas are high in potassium and other

vitamins and minerals used by the body to build sex hormones. Berries are actually the sexual expression of plants because they are the seed containing fruits. Berries are a perfect lovemaking food, and can be erotically hand fed to a lover. Berries are high in bioflavonoids and vitamin C, which heighten health, energy and sex drive.

Many herbs have been proven over centuries to have aphrodisiac properties. Horny Goat Weed (Epimedium grandiflorum): According to legend, a goat herder noticed that whenever his goats ate this herb, it revved up their sexual activity tremendously! The Chinese name for Epimedium, Yin Yang Hua, reflects the effect it has on both women (yin energy) and men (yang energy). Research suggests that this herb can increase sperm count and semen density in men, and supports adrenal hormone production in both sexes.

The Journal of Pharmacology and Clinical Practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine published a study that investigated how Horny Goat Weed acts as a sexual hormonal stimulant. It also improves circulation and has anti-fatigue properties.

Maca is a cruciferous vegetable like kale and broccoli, that grows in the Andes Mountains. Native people dig up the root-like tuber and brew it into a strong drink, which both men and women drink shortly before going off in couples for connubial enjoyment. Incan warriors used maca before battle to increase strength and endurance. Science collaborates what these people have known for centuries. A study in the journal Urology (April 2000) reported that maca significantly increases sexual function in mice and rats.

Maca is high in essential fatty acids, minerals such as phosphorus, calcium, magnesium and zinc, along with vitamins B, C and E, various phytosterols, and other nutritional factors known for their importance to sexual function. Muira Puama, is also known as "Warrior Wood" and "Potency Wood," and has been traditionally used by both men and women in Brazil to increase libido and sexual performance. It is listed in the British Herbal Pharmacopoeia as a treatment for impotence. Ginseng has been used since ancient times to enhance overall vitality and longevity, as well as to spike sex drive in both men and women.

Ellen Kamhi PhD RN, author of "The Natural Guide to Great Sex," has been involved in natural health care for over 4 decades. She can be heard on WUSB, 90.1 fm Friday, 6 pm, WHPC 90.3 pm Wed 12 noon and on Progressive Radio Network. She answers consumer questions at www.naturesanswer.com, and has a private practice on Long Island. For more info, www.naturalnurse.com 800-829-0918.

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