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SPECIAL ISSUE

How to
LIVE LONG
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YOUR GUIDE TO GOOD HEALTH

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How to rev up the failing libido

In an age of careening careers and boardroom battles, ardours are cooling in bedrooms across urban India. Experts talk of a range of remedies to put the zest back into your sex life.



More than a four letter word

Better sense of smell: After sex, the production of a hormone called prolactin surges. This in turn causes stem cells to develop new neurons in the brain's olfactory bulb, its smell centre.

Protects the heart: Researchers say, by having sex three or more times a week, you can reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke by half. Sudden death due to these is considerably lowered by regular sex.

Weight and fitness: Sex, if nothing else, is an exercise. A vigorous bout burns some 200 calories—about the same as running for 15 minutes. It also boosts testosterone levels leading to stronger bones and muscles.

Reduced depression: Scientists swear by this. Prostaglandin, a hormone found only in semen, may be absorbed in the female genital tract, thus modulating female hormones and reducing depression.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY HEMANT CHAWLA;
location courtesy Hotel Shangri-La, New Delhi

Less frequent colds: Individuals who have sex once or twice a week show 30 per cent higher levels of an anti-body called immuno-globulin A. It's known to boost the immune system.

Better bladder control: Ever heard of Kegel exercises? You do them, whether you know it or not, every time when you stem your flow of urine. The same set of muscles work when you have sex.

■ **Kimi Dangor and Aditi Pai**

Dear Doctor,

I'm a 28-year-old working professional and my wife is 25. We have been married for three years and have had a healthy sex life so far. Lately, though the frequency of our sex has gone down. After a hectic day at work, I have no desire to have sex. Am I impotent?"

Surf the Internet, flip through the newspapers, dip into those DIY guide books, queries like this will stare you straight in the face. In the land of *Kamasutra*, the mantra seems to be "No sex, please, we are Indians". All is, obviously, not well in bedrooms across the country. Ask the experts. Sexual monsters—low libido, erection problems, premature ejaculation and infertility—seem to be stalking the 30- and 40-somethings across the country. "With the world's highest prevalence of both diabetes and heart diseases, India is considered the impotence capital of the world," reports **Dr Sudhakar Krishnamurthy**, an eminent sexologist based in Hyderabad—a theme he explores in his recently-released book, *Sex Is Not A Four-Letter Word*.

Here's a new word for you: *obsolagnium*. You may not find it in an ordinary dictionary. But you may well be familiar with the concept—it means "waning sexual desire resulting from age". Experts, however, say it is rarely age per se that accounts for declines in libido. Rather, sexual desire and satisfaction are largely influenced by difficult circumstances. Such circumstances can do much to dampen anyone's libido. "Lifestyle habits like smoking, drinking, unhealthy eating habits, stress at work or home are among the many things that can put a big crimp in your desire for sex at any age," says Dr Harish Shetty, psychiatrist at the Dr L.H. Hiranandani Hospital in Mumbai. As life gets busier in a globalised-liberalised India and careers blossom, statistics tell the sad tale.

According to the data from the IMS Health, 90 million Indians suffer from erectile dysfunction and the market for drugs targeting them is worth Rs 90 crore. Yet another pan-India survey by the Institute for Social and Economic Change holds that nearly 4 per cent of Indian women face menopause between age 29 and 34—one of the lowest thresholds in the world. "God has given us the software, but globalisation has stretched it so much that the neuron-endocrine circuit goes for a toss and the neurological infrastructure gets damaged," rues Shetty. No wonder, the number of patients coming to him with complaints of sexual dysfunctions has shot up five-folds in the last decade.

Just mention the word 'impotence' and it will raise eyebrows or prompt crude jokes. For despite the sexual

Happier teeth: Seminal plasma contains zinc, calcium and other minerals shown to retard tooth decay. Thus, sex could be a more satisfying experience than squeezing a tube of toothpaste.

Glad prostrate: A study recently published by the *British Journal of Urology* asserts that men in their 20s can reduce by a third their chances of getting prostate cancer by ejaculating more than five times a week.