

## Sex in Later Life

Age should not be a barrier to enjoying a satisfying sexual relationship. Although your body may change and health issues may affect your ability or your desire to have sex, research has shown that older people with active sex lives stay fitter and live longer than those that don't.

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### As I get older can I still have sex?

If you feel like it, there is no reason why sex should not continue as you get older. There are no limits, providing the desire is there for both partners. However, if you feel no sexual desire, or less than in earlier life, that should not be seen as a problem either.

Remember, that as an older person you are entitled to your sexuality. It is perfectly acceptable for you to have sexual feelings and for couples to have sexual feelings about each other. Even when the desire and ability to have intercourse has declined, many older adults find that the need for touch and intimacy continues over many years.

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## Sexual Health

Research has shown that one in ten people over the age of 50 are at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection because they are not using appropriate contraception. We have listed here some of the more common Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) that can occur as a result of unprotected sex:

- Chlamydia
- Genital warts
- Gonorrhoea
- Herpes
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## HIV

- Syphilis

For further information about the symptoms, possible complications and treatment of STIs, visit the [NHS](#) website.

[New Croft Centre](#) is a sexual health centre in Newcastle City Centre. It provides a wide range of contraception services and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, as well as other sexual health services. They offer both walk-in clinics and booked appointments.

[Blue Sky Trust](#) offer 1:2:1 and peer support and run workshops for people living with HIV in the north east.

For more information on local HIV information and social care support please visit [newcastle.gov.uk](http://newcastle.gov.uk)

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## Sex and your health

It may be that you start to encounter problems and health worries that you did not have as a younger person, and which may affect your attitude towards sex.

As well as the physical problems that can occur as a result of older age or certain health concerns, there are also emotional issues that can affect your desire to have a sexual relationship.

## Impotence

Impotence (or erectile dysfunction) can occur temporarily at any stage in a man's life, but is more common in older age and can become more persistent. It affects around one in five men over the age of 40 and around half of all men who have diabetes. It is also common after prostate surgery. The good news is that it is treatable. There are various types of treatment available such as tablets, gels and injections, or counselling if the problem is psychological. Speak to your GP who will establish the likeliest cause of the problem and will advise on the best form of treatment for you. Read more on [NHS](#) website.

It is also known that drinking too much alcohol and smoking can lead to problems with impotence, so it always a good idea to cut down on these. See our sections on

[Healthy eating and drinking](#) and [Giving up smoking](#) for further information and advice.

## Menopause

As well as the usual symptoms associated with the [Menopause](#), such as hot flushes and insomnia, it also triggers physical changes that may make some types of sex more difficult or painful, as the vagina becomes narrower and produces less lubrication. There are several lubrication products that can help with this problem, which are widely available from pharmacists.

The menopause can also have many emotional effects. As the levels of oestrogen produced by your body reduce dramatically, and you are no longer fertile, this can have a psychological effect and can result in a lack of confidence. However, many women find that they feel more relaxed about sex when they no longer have to worry about becoming pregnant. Read more on [NHS](#) website.

## Health Conditions

Having a health condition can cause problems in your sex life, but there can be ways to improve any negative effects.

- [Arthritis](#) - Painful joints can make sex uncomfortable. Painkillers and taking a warm bath before sex may help, or you could try a different sexual position.
- [Heart disease](#) or [high blood pressure](#) - Sex places extra demands on your heart and increases your blood pressure. Having a heart condition may also increase your anxiety levels and affect your libido, so it is a good idea to speak to your GP if you are experiencing difficulties.
- [Hysterectomy](#) - A woman should be physically able to have sex approximately eight weeks after a hysterectomy, but there may be psychological problems that prevent you from doing so. This can be helped by [counselling](#).
- [Dementia](#) - Dementia can affect a person's desire to have a sexual relationship. It can also have an effect on the other partner, as the relationship changes. The Alzheimer's Society more information on [Sex and dementia](#).

## Medication

Some medications can affect your ability or desire to have sex, such as drugs for diabetes and blood pressure, or antidepressants. You should always consult your GP if you think that the medication you have been prescribed is causing problems, either physically or emotionally.

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## Contraception and protection

As you get older and your body changes, you may no longer need to consider contraception (birth control) as part of your sexual relationship. However, if this is still an issue for you then there are many different methods of contraception available. Some methods also provide protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

There are several types of contraception, which work in different ways. Barrier methods are available, such as male and female condoms. Women can also use hormonal methods of contraception, such as the pill, or mechanical contraceptive devices, such as an IUD (sometimes referred to as a coil) that is placed in the womb.

Before recommending a contraceptive, your GP will assess your age, medical history, and sexual lifestyle. No contraceptive is 100% reliable, and some have possible side effects. It is therefore important to consider these factors when deciding what sort of protection to use.

Condoms are available for free from your family planning clinic, sexual health clinic, or GUM (genitourinary medicine) clinic. They may also be available from your GP. You can also buy male and female condoms from chemists, as well as from vending machines, supermarkets, garages and other shops.

You may need to change your contraception as you get older, after having children, or if your sexual lifestyle changes. It is worth remembering that the condom is the only form of contraception that also protects you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

For more information on contraception and protection, visit the [NHS website](#).

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## Local Help and Advice

[Relate](#) can provide sex therapy for people who are having problems with their sex life due to physical or emotional reasons. Problems can include loss of desire, erectile

dysfunction, premature ejaculation or pain during intercourse. A therapist will take time to explore with you what you want to achieve or change in your sexual relationship and what the reasons behind this might be. They will then discuss the best way forward.

You can also use the [NHS website search facility](#) to find your nearest clinic.

[MESMAC Newcastle](#) offers a free and confidential service to men who are gay or bisexual, men who have sex with other men and men who are questioning their sexuality. They provide;

- phone information and advice
- one to one support
- sexual health advice
- one hour HIV tests ? The test is a simple finger prick test with pre and post test discussion and results within the hour

[Shine](#) works with women on issues of sexual health including:

- phone information and advice
  - one to one support
  - HIV testing
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## Other Useful Information

- [Sexual Advice Association](#) has helpful fact sheets, videos and an app with more information about sexual problems, including special advice for men, women and couples.
- [InformationNOW section - Finding a partner](#)
- [InformationNOW - sexual health](#)

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## **Useful Organisations**

### **Tyneside Women's Health**

**Email:** enquiries@tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk

**Website:** [www.tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk](http://www.tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 477 7898

**Address:** Wilfred Street, NE6 1JQ

### **Relate Northumberland and Tyneside**

**Email:** enquiries@relate-nt.org.uk

**Website:** [www.relate-nt.org.uk](http://www.relate-nt.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 232 9109

**Address:** MEA House, NE1 8XS

### **Gay Men Tyneside (GMT)**

**Email:** gmtcommittee@gay-men-tyneside.org.uk

**Website:** [www.gay-men-tyneside.org.uk](http://www.gay-men-tyneside.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 233 1333

**Address:** c/o Mesmac, NE1 8QH

### **Sexual Health Centre - New Croft Centre**

**Website:**

[http://www.newcastle-hospitals.org.uk/services/sexual-health\\_clinics-and-walkin-centres\\_new-croft-centre.aspx](http://www.newcastle-hospitals.org.uk/services/sexual-health_clinics-and-walkin-centres_new-croft-centre.aspx)

**Telephone:** 0191 229 2999

**Address:** New Croft Centre, NE1 6ND

### **MESMAC Newcastle**

**Email:** [all@mesmacnewcastle.com](mailto:all@mesmacnewcastle.com)

**Website:** [www.mesmacnewcastle.com](http://www.mesmacnewcastle.com)

**Telephone:** 0191 233 1333

**Address:** People Directorate, Newcastle City Council, NE1 8QH

## **Sexual Advice Association**

**Website:** [www.sexualadviceassociation.co.uk](http://www.sexualadviceassociation.co.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 233 1333

**Address:** The Sexual Advice Association Suite 301, Emblem House,, SE1 2PR

## **Blue Sky Trust**

**Email:** [info@blueskytrust.org](mailto:info@blueskytrust.org)

**Website:** <https://www.blueskytrust.org>

**Telephone:** 0191 233 1333

**Address:** The Castlegate, NE1 2JQ

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## **Related Articles**

[Home adaptations, equipment and aids](#)

[Dementia](#)

[Arthritis](#)

[10 Tips for good health](#)

[Heart Attacks](#)

[Benefits of being physically active](#)

[Menopause](#)

[Chronic Pain](#)

## Urinary Tract Infection