

More Sex Means Less Chance of ED

There's new advice for older men who want to preserve their sexual function: have sex, and have it often, researchers say.

In a study that followed nearly 1,000 older Finnish men for five years, researchers found that those who were regularly having sex at the start of the study were at lower risk of developing erectile dysfunction (ED) by the study's end.

In fact, the more often the men had sex, the lower their ED risk.

The implication, say the researchers, is that men should be encouraged to stay sexually active into their golden years.

Dr. Juha Koskimaki and colleagues at the University of Tampere in Finland report the findings in the *American Journal of Medicine*. The study included 989 men who were between the ages of 55 and 75 at the outset.

Overall, those who said they had sex less than once per week were twice as likely to develop ED over the next five years as men who had sex at least once a week. Furthermore, compared with men who had sex three or more times per week, their ED risk was increased nearly four-fold.

A number of factors contribute to ED development, many of which could also affect a man's sexual activity -- such as age, diabetes and heart disease. However, after taking account of those factors, sexual activity itself remained linked to ED risk, Koskimaki's team found.

It may be a matter of "use it or lose it," according to the researchers. Just as exercise boosts physical fitness, they note, regular sexual activity may help a man preserve his erectile function.

ED occurs when there are problems with blood flow to the penis. Regular sexual activity, Koskimaki's team writes, may help maintain healthy blood vessel function in the erectile tissue.

*SOURCE: American Journal of Medicine, July 2008.
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