

# sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

**factoid** 46% of UA students exercise or participate in physical activities at least 4 or more hours each week. An additional 30% exercise at least 2-3 hours per week.

## Q. Is it true that there are sexual side effects from taking anti-depressants? What can be done about them?

A. Depression is a medical condition that should be taken seriously. Fortunately, with proper treatment depression can be managed and/or resolved successfully. However, as with many treatment plans, there may be side effects to contend with.

In 2002, a study conducted among 6,297 patients taking a range of antidepressants found that 37% reported experiencing sexual dysfunction. The most common sexual side effects reported with antidepressant treatment are: 1) diminished interest in and desire for sex, 2) inability to achieve or sustain erections in men, 3) vaginal dryness and decreased sensitivity of the genitals in women, and 4) difficulty or inability to achieve orgasm.

The researchers also found that certain factors tended to increase the likelihood of sexual dysfunction resulting from antidepressant use. Some of these factors included: increased age, higher dosage, presence of additional illness associated with sexual dysfunction, other medications, and smoking 6-20 cigarettes daily.

The good news is there are steps one can take to help minimize risk of sexual side effects due to antidepressant use. A few suggestions are:

- Ask your health care provider about antidepressant options that have lower rates of sexual side effects (e.g., Bupropion [Wellbutrin] and nefazodone [Serzone]).
- Change the time at which you take your medication (if you normally have sex in the evening, plan to take your medication just before falling asleep each night).
- Ask your health care provider about reducing the dosage of medication.
- Wait to see if sexual side effects decrease over time (approximately 1/5 of patients will experience improvement in sexual functioning within 6 months of starting medication).

If you have depression, it's important that you seek professional care and treatment. This may involve medicine and/or counseling. A good provider will work with you to ensure that your treatment plan improves your health and condition, while attempting to minimize complications. For appointments, call Counseling and Psychological Services at 621-3334.

References: [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com), [www.healthyplace.com](http://www.healthyplace.com), [www.about.com](http://www.about.com)

Have a question? Send it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)

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