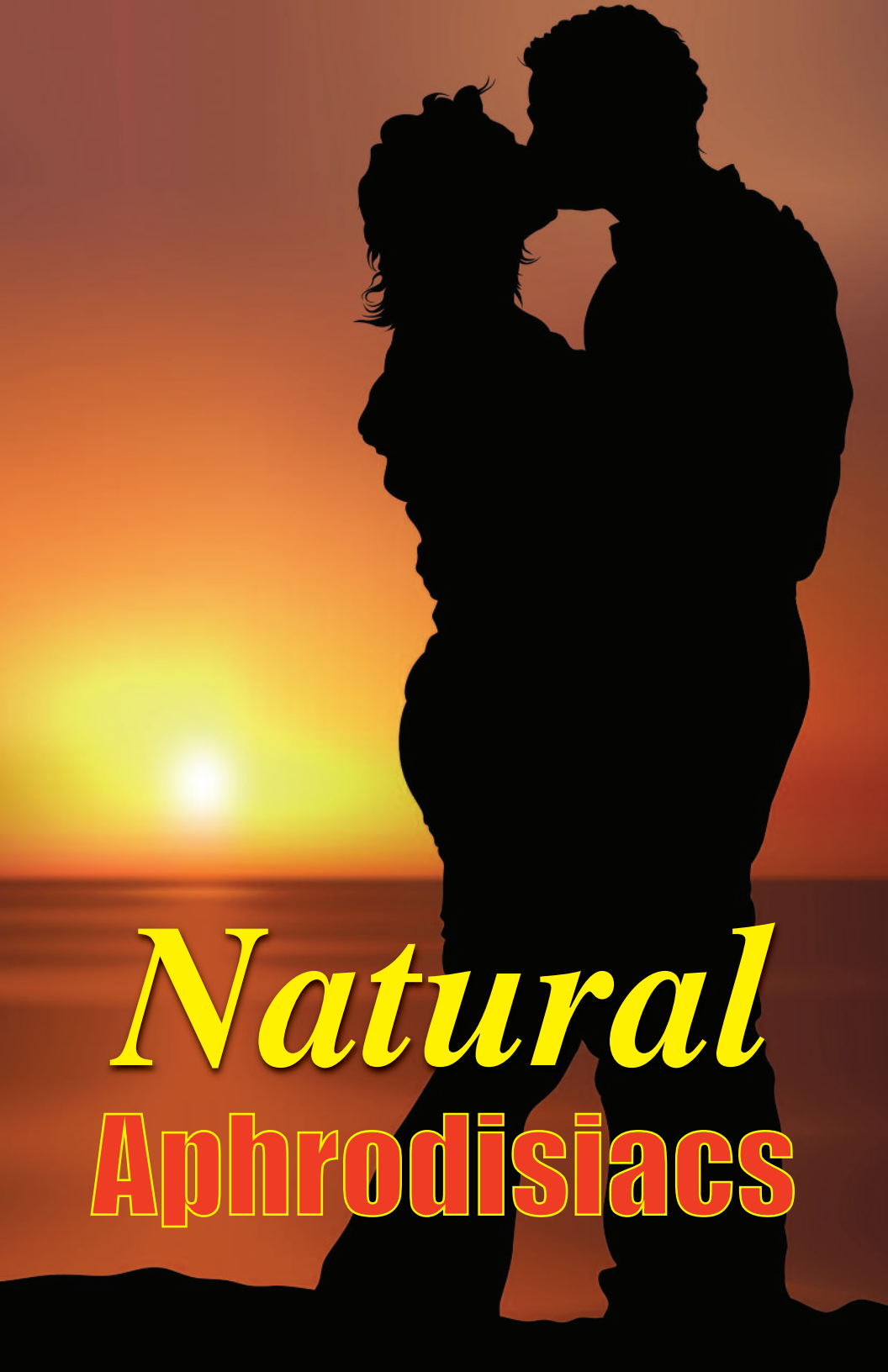
Natural
Aphrodisiacs

Natural Aphrodisiacs

Hotter Sex for Men of Any Age!

by David Blyweiss, M.D.

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HAVE YOU LOST YOUR LIBIDO?

Once upon a time, you thought a lot about sex. In fact, you might say that sex was on your mind on an almost continual basis. And, if you were in the right place at the right time, those thoughts could easily turn into action. But those youthful day's of sowing your wild oats often fade into the background as a man ages. The responsibilities of adulthood, an aging body and even some medical conditions can leave you wondering where your libido went.

If you've lost that spark of desire, you aren't alone. Up to 16 percent of men experience a loss of libido as they get older. It can sneak up on you over several months until one day you realize that you just aren't interested any more. To help identify the early warning signs of lost libido, answer the following questions true or false:

- Touching takes place only in the bedroom.
- Sex does not give you feelings of connection and sharing.
- One of you is always the initiator and the other feels pressured.
- You no longer look forward to sex.
- Sex is mechanical and routine.
- You almost never have sexual thoughts or fantasies about your partner.
- You have sex once or twice a month at most.

If you answered true to many or most of these questions, you may be on your way to losing sexual desire. But loss of libido isn't something you have to live with. There is much you can do to regain your sex drive and your happy outlook on life.

FAILURE TO LAUNCH

There are many reasons why men lose their sexual desire. Here are the most common:

Hormone Imbalance: When your hormone levels are out of balance, sexual desire can go out the window. This is particularly true if your testosterone levels are low. Testosterone is the major androgenic steroid hormone produced in a man's testes and, to a lesser degree, in the adrenal glands of both men and women. Testosterone production in the testes is triggered by another hormone known as luteinizing hormone (LH), which is produced by the pituitary gland in your brain. The pituitary gland, in turn, is controlled by the hypothalamus—a tiny part of the brain that sits just above your pituitary gland and is the king of the sex glands. The hypothalamus is responsible for your sex drive and secretes gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) which tells the pituitary gland when to secrete LH.

Normally, when testosterone levels are low, the pituitary gland secretes more LH to kick-start production. But high levels of testosterone let your brain know there is an adequate amount of this male hormone available and the pituitary gland then signals the testes to shut down production until more testosterone is needed. This complicated system of signals usually works well, particularly when you are young. But, as a man ages, his body's available testosterone is reduced.

The Role of Testosterone in Regulation of Sexual Function

Low testosterone levels can really put a crimp in your style by reducing your libido. In fact, it can even cause a total loss of interest in sex. But just measuring your total testosterone levels may not tell you or your doctor what you need to know. According to a study of more than 400 men by researchers at the Mayo Clinic, testing the levels of *bioavailable* testosterone—the amount of testosterone your body can actually use—can give a much better indication of why your libido is lagging.

Even though testosterone is primarily known as a sex hormone, it actually plays a much larger role in your body. Testosterone helps build and maintain healthy body tissue, including lean muscle and bone. In a study by Rotterdam's Erasmus University in The Netherlands, 403 healthy men, age 72 to 94, had their serum testosterone levels measured. The researchers then measured the patients' muscle strength,

body composition (the percentage of fat versus lean muscle), and bone density and discovered a direct correlation between low serum testosterone levels and the deterioration of muscle and bone that often accompanies aging.

As important as low testosterone levels are, preliminary studies suggest that too much of the female hormone estrogen can also dampen your desire. Just as women produce some testosterone, men naturally have low levels of estrogen. But when a man has too much estrogen circulating through his body, he can find himself unable to perform in the bedroom.

Environmental estrogens, obesity, and even stress can produce excess estrogen in men that can contribute to the inappropriate growth of mammary tissue cells, resulting in a problem commonly known as “man boobs.” This same estrogen dominance in men also contributes to hair loss, atherosclerosis, prostate problems, weight gain, impotency, and yes, a low libido.

An imbalance in your thyroid hormone can also extinguish the fire of desire. Low levels of the thyroid hormone (hypothyroid) can cause erectile dysfunction, as can too much thyroid (hyperthyroid). About 70 percent of men with hyperthyroid conditions experience a loss of interest in sex and 40 percent develop breast tissue growth. And if you are taking a synthetic thyroid medication, be aware that taking too much can send you into an emotional funk, cause testosterone to convert into estrogen, and lead to erectile dysfunction. Ask your health care provider for a natural thyroid medication to avoid these side effects.

Performance Anxiety: Desire starts in the brain—and that means what goes on in your head can affect your libido. Anxiety about your performance can extinguish the flame even before you light the match. This is especially true if you have failed to achieve an erection or been unable to complete the sexual act in the past. And, the anxiety doesn’t stop there. Many modern, loving men feel they have not truly “performed” unless their partners climax during sex, too. And as statistics show, only 26 percent of women report that they always experience orgasm during sex, compared with 75 percent of men. No wonder men feel the pressure!

Stress: Job stress and self-esteem are also big factors. If a man loses his job or if his performance at work is challenged, his self-worth takes a direct hit. As a result, he often numbs himself sexually. Desire is a healthy form of entitlement—when a man doesn't feel deserving, he may shut down emotionally and sexually.

Medical Conditions: A variety of medical problems and chronic physical conditions can diminish a man's sex drive. Serious illnesses, such as cancer and depression, can certainly dampen any thoughts of sex. Cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and diabetes can reduce blood flow to the body, including the genitals, wreaking havoc on libido as well. Chronic alcoholism and even occasional excessive alcohol consumption are notorious for inflaming desire but impeding performance. Conditions such as thyroid disorders and tumors of the pituitary gland (which controls most hormone production, including sex hormones) can also lower libido.

Medications: The class of depression drugs called SSRIs can inhibit desire. So can tranquilizers and blood pressure medications. Fortunately, there are often natural solutions that can manage mild to moderate forms of depression, hypertension and other conditions that won't thwart your sexual desire.

Illicit drugs, such as heroin, cocaine and marijuana, may also cause loss of libido. Although many people claim that marijuana heightens lovemaking, the drug can actually lower your libido. The negative effects of marijuana have been known for more than a century. In fact, according to the Indian Hemp Drug Commission of 1894, marijuana-based drugs have "no aphrodisiac power whatsoever and, as a matter of fact, they are used by ascetics in this country with the ostensible objective of destroying sexual appetite!"

LOVE POTION NO. 9

Marijuana isn't the only substance with the false reputation to enhance sexual desire. Aphrodisiacs abound throughout history. Some are harmless and some are downright bizarre. But most simply don't work—and a few are even dangerous.

Named for Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sexual love and beauty, an aphrodisiac is a food, drink, plant, animal or scent that has the reputation of increasing sexual desire. Since ancient times, men have eaten the genitals of other animals in hopes of capturing the animal's virility. Most popular were the penis and testicles from bulls, donkeys or deer.

Hippocrates recommended eating deer penis to cure sexual difficulties and preparations for this "remedy" were even included in several European pharmacopoedias as late as the 18th century. In Asia, it was thought that sexual desire could be increased by drinking fresh bat or snake blood. And African men who wanted to boost their libido often turned to powdered rhino horn.

Certain foods have also gained a reputation in the sexual arena. Since the glory days of the Roman Empire, truffles have been considered potent aphrodisiacs. More popular were oysters—a belief that persists today. Legend has it that Casanova ate fifty raw oysters every morning while in the bath with a lady.

While most aphrodisiacs are relatively harmless, some traditional love potions can be deadly. The most well known is Spanish fly. While it's been used throughout history as a potent aphrodisiac—the Roman empress Livia (58 B.C. to 29 A.D.) purportedly slipped it to members of the imperial family to stimulate them into committing sexual indiscretions that could later be used against them—Spanish fly is based on a toxic chemical called cantharidin found in an iridescent emerald-green beetle from Southern Europe. Cantharidin can damage the kidneys, irritate the gastrointestinal tract, and even result in death.

LIBIDO LIFTERS

As you can see, the ability of most aphrodisiacs to trigger desire is more fantasy than fact. But there are some natural prosexual compounds that are scientifically proven to work. Here are the most effective herbs that can reset your libido and reignite that lovin' feeling:

Epimedium Grandiflorum: You may be more familiar with this herb by its popular name: horny goat weed. Jokes aside, legend claims that

epimedium got its suggestive nickname from a goat herder who noticed that his flock suddenly became sexually active after eating the plant. The good news is that this prosexual herb can do the same for you!

Researchers believe that epimedium increases libido by modulating cortisol levels, the primary stress hormone. Studies of the herb have also found that it increases the production and viability of sperm.

Epimedium is a very safe herb and there have been no adverse side effects reported, despite its long history of use. The recommended dose is 250 to 1,000 mg. of epimedium daily, divided into two or three doses throughout the day.

Mucuna Pruriens: With a long tradition as an aphrodisiac, the beans from this climbing shrub have one of the most fascinating chemical profiles in the plant world—especially when it comes to the brain-body interaction necessary for an erection. Among the alkaloids in this Ayurvedic herb, mucuna pruriens contains serotonin, a natural brain chemical that improves mood and relaxes muscle. But, more importantly, mucuna is a wonderful source of the amino acid levodopa, more commonly called l-dopa. Your brain converts l-dopa into dopamine, a hormone-like substance that is an important neurotransmitter in both the central and peripheral nervous systems. Not only does this neurotransmitter help stimulate the nerve impulses that lead to an erection, more dopamine means increased sexual desire.

Not surprisingly, mucuna's prosexual activity is well documented in a number of Ayurvedic texts, including the *Glossary of Indian Medicinal Plants* published by the Central Scientific and Industrial Research of the Government of India. Research has discovered that the alkaloids in mucuna boost sperm count. Mucuna seeds have also been shown to increase testosterone levels. And, as you've seen, more testosterone not only leads to a deposition of protein in the muscles and increased muscle mass and strength, it also boosts libido. What's more, recent studies have found that mucuna extract enhances mental alertness and improve coordination. To be sexy *and* smart, most herbalists recommend taking 300 to 600 mg. of mucuna containing at least 10 percent l-dopa a day.

Quebracho Blanco: For generations, quebracho blanco was a closely guarded secret among South American men and women. Although the herb was used to treat a number of medical conditions, locals valued it for its ability to enhance the sexual experience. Its reputation as a natural aphrodisiac comes in part from the fact that quebracho bark helps prevent the blockage of bloodflow through the body. But that's just the beginning of this herb's reproductive benefits.

Quebracho is an evergreen tree native to the rainforests of Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil. Towering to nearly 100 feet tall, the bark was used by Europeans as a tanning substance. Little did they know that quebracho offered much more exciting possibilities. It wasn't until modern science dissected the bark's chemical structure did the Western world discover that quebracho contained a yohimbine-like substance, a potent prosexual chemical that is now available as a prescription drug.

The yohimbine-type compound found in quebracho increases libido and shortens the latency period between ejaculations. In one open trial of 160 men experiencing ED as a result of taking an antidepressant, researchers from the Transcultural Mental Health Institute in Washington D.C. found that quebracho effectively sparked their sexual yearning.

Research has also found that it enhances erectile function in patients with diabetic neuropathy. Better yet, yohimbine has a positive effect on depression and can help alleviate the impotency often associated with it.

Available as a dietary supplement, German researchers have found that quebracho binds to human penile receptors and dilates blood vessels. In one study, Polish investigators gave 100 men suffering from ED a compound containing 30 mg. of quebracho three times a day. After taking the supplement for four weeks, 14 percent of the participants were able to have satisfying sex and another 15 percent showed an increase in sexual desire. Quebracho is extremely safe for healthy men and 50 mg. a day should do the trick. The only reported side effect is dizziness. However, if you have high blood pressure, it's best to avoid this herb.

Tribulus Terrestris: This is another herb that can titillate your libido. A native of India and Africa, tribulus terrestris has been used by Bulgarian

athletes to increase muscle mass before important competitions. But long before it was adopted by bodybuilders, Europeans relied on tribulus to balance hormone levels and encourage longer-lasting erections. And the Chinese have used it for centuries as a remedy for low libido and other sexual disorders.

The key to tribulus' impact on desire is a phytochemical called protodioscin. Clinically proven to improve sexual desire, tribulus has long been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine and by Ayurvedic practitioners. A recent study on the herb's effects on libido was recently conducted by researchers at the National University of Singapore. A group of normal and castrated rats were tested based on their sexual behavior. The rats were then divided into groups that received either plain water, water containing testosterone or water spiked with tribulus. By the end of the study, the rats drinking the plain and testosterone-laced water showed no improvement in their libido. Those taking the tribulus, however, showed a significant improvement in sexual behavior, leading the researchers to conclude that the herb's ability to stimulate the natural production of testosterone makes it an effective aphrodisiac.

But these potent aphrodisiac properties are only one attribute of this prosexual herb. Scientists have discovered that tribulus increases both the quantity and quality of sperm. Other research found that the herb has a positive impact on performance. In one study, rams were given an oral preparation of a proprietary tribulus compound. The results? The rams enjoyed an extended period of sexual activity thanks to elevated testosterone levels. Another animal experiment found that when pigs with "lasting impotence" were given tribulus for just 10 days, every single one of them recovered.

But this herb's action may go beyond testosterone. In two separate analyses of tribulus, Turkish and Korean researchers found that the herb relaxes smooth muscle, allowing more blood to flow into the penis. Bulgarian scientists have also found that tribulus increases the quality and quantity of sperm production, improves sperm motility and help ensure the sperm's survival.

In a handful of human studies, researchers have confirmed that tribulus' proerectile properties go beyond the animal kingdom to help men conquer erectile dysfunction. In all of the studies, researchers found

that the herb increased the serum levels of both LH and testosterone—and without side effects. The best way to increase your sex hormones is by taking 200 mg. of tribulus a day.

Yohimbe: Yohimbe is probably the most thoroughly researched and powerful herbal aphrodisiac on the planet, especially if you are also suffering from erectile dysfunction. Researchers at Valparaiso University in Indiana found that yohimbe had more beneficial effects on most aspects of sexual response in men with erectile dysfunction than in sexually functional men, including an increase in the frequency of sexual activity, as well as increased sexual arousal and erectile response during masturbation.

In a 1977 German double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial, 86 men with ED were given either 30 mg. of yohimbe (yohimbine hydrochloride) or a placebo for eight weeks. Overall, 71 of the men in the yohimbe group reported improvement in sexual desire, sexual satisfaction, frequency of sexual contacts and quality of erection.

Because this compound is a natural vasodilator, it improves the circulatory blood flow in a man's genitals. In fact, yohimbe is so effective, it is the only herb that has been approved by the FDA for the treatment of erectile dysfunction.

In one study of sexual function in men, yohimbe induced spontaneous erections in 20 percent of the participants, even without sexual stimulation. Even if you don't experience this type of spontaneity, yohimbe has an impressive track record for producing consistent results in healthy men.

But yohimbe's therapeutic properties don't stop there. It's also a documented alpha-2 andrenergic antagonist that works within both the central and peripheral nervous systems. Alpha-2 antagonists work by blocking insulin and the stress chemical norephinephrine (adrenaline), which leads to an increase in available blood sugar—and more blood sugar means more energy, in this case sexual energy.

For the best results, take 15 mg. of yohimbe every day. The full effects of the herb are usually noticed after three weeks of daily use. But, since yohimbe is so powerful, it also carries some important warnings.

While a typical dose of yohimbe is usually safe, some people experience anxiety, dizziness, a rapid heart beat, and an increase in blood pressure. There have also been reports of chills, vertigo, hallucinations, and a loss of muscle function in people taking more than 40 mg. of yohimbine (the active chemical in yohimbe) per day.

GET ON THE LOVE TRAIN

As effective as these herbs are for increasing desire, it's also important to support a healthy libido with habits that encourage overall health and wellbeing. A well-balanced diet based on whole foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean protein is critical to sexual function. For specific dietary recommendations, I recommend reading *The Estrogen Lowering Diet* in this series. Exercise is also an important tool for enhancing your libido because of its positive effect on both testosterone levels and self esteem. *Exercises You Can Do Everyday To Reduce Estrogen and Make Your Testosterone Surge* can help you develop a workout program that enhances every aspect of your health and sexuality.

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