LOW LIBIDO IN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE
Reduced Sexual Drive in Autoimmune Disease

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Various symptoms in autoimmune diseases, including endocrine imbalances and pain, contribute to low libido in autoimmune disease. Help is available.

What is Low Libido?

Low libido, which is a condition of reduced sexual drive or desire, is a frequent symptom in patients with autoimmune diseases. Low libido can accompany other side effects of autoimmune disease, such as fatigue, muscle weakness, nutrient deficiencies, and depression or it can occur as a result of hormone imbalances in patients with autoimmune endocrine disorders. Certain medications used to treat autoimmune disorders can also contribute to impaired sexual desire. Stress, including the stress of dealing with an autoimmune condition, can also cause low libido.

Addressing the Causes

In patients with autoimmune endocrine disorders, restoring levels of thyroid hormone and DHEA are usually the first steps in improving libido. However, in the cause of thyroid dysfunction, restoring levels to the normal range may not be adequate. Individuals have unique optimal levels of both levothyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3). Blood tests for both FT4 and FT3 and trials with different forms of therapy may be necessary for optimal results. In patients using anti-thyroid drugs for hyperthyroidism, the use of block and replace therapy, in which thyroid hormone is added to the anti-thyroid drug may be necessary to ensure optimal levels of both FT4 and FT3.

In patients with malabsorption disorders such as celiac disease or Crohn’s disease, nutrient deficiencies can be common, particularly deficiencies of oil soluble vitamins and essential oils. Supplementation with vitamins A and D, evening primrose oil, flaxseed oil and other omega-3 essential oils can help improve libido.

In patients with connective tissue disorders symptoms of fatigue, pain, or reduced mobility can contribute to a low sex drive. Following diet and lifestyle recommendations for Lupus can improve health, reduce flares and reduce the amount of medications needed to control symptoms. In doing so, libido can be improved.

Illicit Drugs and Prescribed Medications

A number of illicit drugs such as marijuana can contribute to low libido. Alcohol abuse can also impair libido. Drugs that interfere with libido include some antidepressants and medications used for the treatment of hypertension. If prescription medications are
suspected of contributing to low libido, patients can ask their doctors if a different medication can be used instead.

**Treating Low Libido**

Stress reduction techniques, such as yoga, meditation, and other forms of light exercise, are all reported to improve libido. The hormone DHEA, which is often used as a treatment for systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is also a common treatment for low libido. The herbs gingko biloba and maca are also recommended for improving libido. Low testosterone levels or imbalances in progesterone and estrogen can also contribute to low libido. Supplements, either topical or compounded oral formulations, are often used to treat low libido when hormone imbalances are found. In traditional Chinese medicine, treating imbalances of yin and yang improve libido.

Before trying any herbal remedies or supplements, patients should check with their doctors to make sure there are no contraindications or drug interferences. Patients may also want to check with their doctors about having blood tests for DHEA, estradiol, progesterone, and testosterone as well as FT4 and FT3 to see if hormone treatments are recommended.

**Resources:**


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