

Natural APHRODISIACS

Do you want to create an extra special evening for your partner? Or are you flagging in the bedroom, avoiding making love? Rosamund Burton investigates natural ways to kick-start your libido.

Do you want to add some spice to your love life? There's more to this than Barry White, red roses and Viagra. Sydney-based naturopath, Tracey Williams believes that love-making is a sacred act and much of her work is about reminding people to slow down and do simple things like have a long luxurious bath by candle light, so they're relaxed and able to enjoy making love. She teaches people how to centre themselves using techniques such as visualisation and meditation.

"Often the problem," Tracey explains, "is that people don't have time for each other. People lead such busy, stressful lives and they are trying to fit sex into their schedule, but it's not easy."

Stress can sometimes lead to a low libido, and often people use sex as a stress release, but Tracey says that is not the solution, because

they are still stressed afterwards. If someone is exhausted, run down, has an illness, or an immune system that isn't functioning properly, then they're likely to think they need an aphrodisiac, because they will also have a low libido. Psychological disorders and medications, such as anti-depressants, can also be the cause of a diminished sex drive.

Food

"History has it that Casanova ate between one and two dozen oysters a day," Tracey says. Oysters are very high in zinc and this mineral is important for both men and women, but particularly for male reproduction, as it is instrumental in making sperm. Tomatoes used to be known as love apples, because of their shape and colour. They contain vitamin C and lycopene, which tones up the system. Chocolate

is known as an aphrodisiac because it contains phenylethylamine, which gives you a feel-good feeling. Chocolate also contains magnesium, which is relaxing. Women often eat chocolate just prior to, or when they have their period, because they crave these feel-good amino acids.

Raman Das Mahatyagi, who is a practitioner of Ayurveda – the traditional medicine of India – and founder of Yatan Holistic Ayurvedic Centre in Sydney, recommends drinking hot milk with two eggs mixed into it just before going to bed. This, he says, is a powerful aphrodisiac, as it gives you immediate energy. He also suggests soaking some almonds overnight, grinding them down and adding them to honey, ginger, cardamom and some hot milk. Again you drink it just before going to bed.

"This is a very good aphrodisiac," he explains. "Next morning you feel very satisfied and not lethargic."



An Ayurvedic recommendation is eating a handful of pistachio nuts every day. And for those with more adventurous taste, goat's testicles fried in ghee with pepper longum and ayurvedic rock salt is also a good aphrodisiac for both men and women.

Ylang ylang is great for intimacy and sensuality. It also boosts confidence and dissolves resentment and fear

Aromas

Smell is incredibly evocative, and although we may be unaware of it, a person's natural smell can determine whether or not we are attracted to them. Filomena Leone, a Sydney-based remedial massage therapist specialising in aromatherapy, believes feeling relaxed and deserving is fundamental to being in the mood for love. The research of neurologist and psychiatrist, Dr Alan Hirsch in the USA has shown how essential oils affect both the endocrine and the limbic systems, so these aromas are far more than merely tantalising for the nose. It is a question of finding the one that works for you.

"Jasmine is definitely a natural aphrodisiac. Jasmine plants' aroma is naturally stronger during the night, so instantly you know what purpose the oil has. It is the heady night-time smell of summer sensuality," Filomena says.

A blend that has opened the door for nights of love-making for many of Filomena's clients is:

- ♥ three drops of patchouli
- ♥ three drops of ylang ylang
- ♥ four drops of orange
- ♥ in 20ml of a good quality cold-pressed oil such as sweet almond, jojoba or olive oil.

This blend can be used for a head, neck and shoulder massage, which means you enjoy the smell, but it also enters the blood and lymphatic system.

"Patchouli helps frigidity and emotional suppression. It

promotes relaxation, letting go, and connectedness to sexual expression and intimacy," she explains. "Ylang ylang, which is incredibly sweet and comes from night-time flowers, is for intimacy and sensuality. It is also confidence-boosting and dissolves resentment and fear. It brings a person into their body, and makes them feel safe. Orange is for joy and communication."

Some people need to be very grounded and relaxed before they get in the mood, so sandalwood is good for releasing tension. And if you need to spice your love life up a bit, then black pepper is the essential oil to try.

Only a few drops of the essential oils should be used and they should always be mixed with a base oil (for massage) as they are very strong. Also if you are pregnant, they should only be used under the guidance of a qualified natural therapist.

Herbs

When it comes to herbs, naturopath Tracey Williams recommends damiana for both men and women with low libido, especially when anxiety is present.

Tribulus terrestris is a good one for men, as it mimics testosterone in the body, helps with testosterone production, and increases sex drive. Both these herbs are available in health food shops.

Raman Das explains that in Ayurvedic medicine, all aphrodisiacs can be used either for increasing sexual energy or boosting overall health, because they build the body up and increase endurance, as well as making semen or ovum stronger.

Musali (asparagus adscens) increases the sex hormones, and makes semen more solid, so ejaculation is delayed. Kannch beeja works more

on the pituitary gland, and is more for the mind. Ashwa gandha is good for stressful lives, particularly for people who are extremely busy and or have a lot on their minds and find that stress is debilitating their sex life. Shatawari balances the hormones in women, enhances their beauty, making them feel and look good.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine it's believed that the yin and yang (two opposing energies in the body) need to be in balance, and the body's lifeforce, the Qi, needs to be strong. It is understood in Traditional Chinese Medicine that the kidneys control reproductive energy and sexual energy. Lily Liu is a Chinese herbalist and acupuncturist with a practice in Sydney's suburb, Surry Hills. She says that if men have a kidney yang deficiency, this means there is a sperm deficiency and an erection could be difficult. A kidney yin deficiency would have symptoms for a woman such as a dry vagina. The liver controls emotion, and if someone is very stressed or angry, this can create too much liver yin energy, which also debilitates sexual energy.

She recommends red ginseng for balancing both yin and yang energies; a red berry called gou ji zi for the kidney yin and also a root called he shou wu. For balancing kidney yang use rou cong rong or yin hang hao - which is also known as horny goat weed. This was first used in China hundreds of years ago after someone noticed that the goats, after eating the leaves of this plant, demonstrated high sexual activity, and the nannies subsequently produced lots of kids. It increases sperm production and stimulates sensory nerves. **NH**