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On The COVER

Aphrodisiac Prescription Drugs



A number of prescription drugs may act as sex stimulants. In a study called "Prosexual substances: Pharmacological treatment of sexual disorders," published in *Praxis* (5/3, Germany, 1996), a number of drugs were discussed for their potential aphrodisiac properties, including Levodopa (L-dopa), Bromocriptine (Parlodel), Amantadine, Pergolide, Naloxone, Naltrexone and Imipramine.

The British Medical Journal (309/6959, 1994) carried a report on increased female sexual response after administration of oxytocin, which is sold by Sandoz Pharmaceuticals under the brand name Syntocinon. A search of the literature shows that oxytocin induces a variety of reproductive behaviors in animals. These actions are apparently facilitated by the "priming" effect on certain cells by sex and steroid hormones. However, no adequate study has confirmed the observations in this report in women. More research is needed to clarify the role of oxytocin as a potential aphrodisiac in women in the presence of the sex-steroid hormones.

In addition, all the aphrodisiac drugs mentioned above have serious potential side effects. Levodopa, for example, has been known to cause cardiac irregularities, psychotic episodes, suicidal tendencies and tremors. Bromocriptine has produced nausea, constipation and anorexia. Amantadine has produced nausea and insomnia, and overdoses have resulted in death. The list goes on.

For men, a new drug by Pfizer Inc. called Viagra (sildenafil citrate) was recently approved by the FDA for the treatment of impotence. The clinical studies showed that Viagra corrects erectile dysfunction problems in 64 to 72 percent of men, compared with only 23 percent of the men given a placebo. The drug appears to have a few side effects, and has to be avoided by men taking nitroglycerin because Viagra interacts with nitroglycerin to lower blood pressure. Adverse side effects include headache, facial flushing, indigestion and increased retinal sensitivity to light.

Viagra works by increasing cyclic GMP (guanosine monophosphate), a naturally produced chemical that is essential for men to maintain erection, and for genital sensitivity in women. The amino acid arginine and a specific extract from ginseng also increase cyclic GMP levels.

While Viagra has been approved for treating male sexual dysfunction, physicians are increasingly prescribing it for women. The rationale is that, if the drug can improve blood flow to the male genitals, thus improving male libido, a similar response in women may also produce enhanced sexual stimulation.

Sexual dysfunction in women is more difficult to ascertain, physicians note. However, for women who feel they suffer from reduced libido or other sexual dysfunction, they should not consider arginine or Viagra the sole province of men.

FYI

What Is The Best Aphrodisiac?

The Life Extension Foundation has investigated a wide range of purported aphrodisiac products from around the world. Our research has led us to several substances that have been shown to be both safe and effective for most people.

Based on the latest research, men may want to try a new formula called MiraForte, that combines concentrated Muira puama and nettle extract with maca and zinc. The suggested dose of the MiraForte formula is one tablet, two times a day. Muira puama extract by itself costs \$83.00 in Swiss pharmacies, but Americans can buy the MiraForte formula as a dietary supplement at a far lower price.

Maca has mild properties that may support Muira puama's aphrodisiac action. Maca has been traditionally used to increase energy and stamina, and as an aphrodisiac for both men and women.

Arginine in the dose of 9 to 12 grams a day also can be taken by men and women to enhance sex organ sensation and performance. Arginine works directly in the corpus cavernosum area of the genitals, whereas other supplements work within the brain. One side effect of taking this much arginine is that it may cause diarrhea. Some people may find that as little as 6 grams of arginine induces enhanced genital sensation and performance.

Based on the different mechanisms of action, men may consider taking one balanced MiraForte tablet twice a day, along with 6 to 12 grams of arginine about an hour before an anticipated sexual event.

Muira puama has not been studied in women, but arginine may work as well in women as it does in men. In addition, supplementation with arginine can produce many health benefits including improvement of vascular tone throughout the body.

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