

Make your own...

BAKED SWEET POTATO FRIES

Baking your chips, as opposed to frying them, can reduce the fat and calorie content by more than half.

And it's even better if you use sweet potatoes. While normal potatoes do not count as one of your five-a-day, however you eat them, their cousins do, as they're an excellent source of beta-carotene. This is converted into Vitamin A in the body – essential for healthy skin, the immune system and good eye health. They're so tasty, you won't need to slather them with salt, either.

INGREDIENTS

Serves two
600g sweet potatoes, chopped into chips
1 heaped tsp hot paprika
1 tbsp dried coriander leaves
Garlic infused rapeseed oil
Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

- * Pre-heat oven to 180C
- * Put the chips into a large bowl, add oil and other ingredients
- * Mix well with your fingers, making sure every chip is coated
- * Bake for about 25 minutes, turning once
- * Serve with aioli dip

Frederick Faulkner

BLOG ME BETTER...

THE BLOG: joanpagano fitness.com

THE BLOGGER: Joan Pagano, 70, author of several books on strength-training for women.



WHAT'S IT ABOUT? Pagano recommends ways for women to stay healthy in later years and also advises on exercises for breast-cancer patients.

DEAL OF THE WEEK**35% OFF**

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By Charlotte Hobbs

THE pound is plummeting, temperatures are plunging – and things are equally frosty in the bedroom. Three-quarters of women lose interest in sex after reaching the age of 50, according to research revealed last week. Half of them refuse to talk to their partner, let alone a medical expert, about it. And just two per cent have sought treatment for a less-active sex drive.

The study, commissioned by intimate skin-care brand Replens, made depressing reading. But the overwhelming verdict from the medical community was that couples should not be suffering in silence. On Friday, GPs were urged to prescribe testosterone drugs to women with flagging sex drives, claiming the therapy had them 'going from feeling drained to running marathons'.

Dr Arun Ghosh, a private GP in Liverpool with a special interest in sexual health, said: 'There are so many treatments out there that can help with low libido or discomfort.'

'It's so important women don't stay quiet about this – not only for the sake of their relationship, but for their own health.'

Painful sex can be a sign of a more serious medical problem, he added. 'Getting checked out for low libido is as important as having your blood pressure or cholesterol checked. With a little bit of help, there's no reason you can't have the best sex of your life in your 50s.'

We spoke to Britain's leading women's health experts to find out exactly how to make that a reality...

IT'S EASY TO GET TREATMENT FOR PHYSICAL CHANGES

Dr Heather Currie is spokeswoman for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, chairwoman of the British Menopause Society and founder of Menopause Matters, providing information about symptoms and treatments.

She says: Reduced libido in women over 50 is very often due to physical changes that occur and it is a tragedy that, despite being easy to treat, so few women seek help due to embarrassment.

Research has shown that while nearly all menopausal women believe an active sex life is important, more than half have experienced discomfort.

Oestrogen levels fall after the menopause, causing the body's tissues to become thinner, drier and less elastic or flexible. This will not improve without treatment. One option is oestrogen cream or gel – a form of HRT that doesn't carry the risks of pills or patches – which can be prescribed by your GP.

Good non-HRT options (which can be used alongside HRT) include specialised medical moisturisers that come in a pessary form. There are also options that do a similar thing and can be picked up in chemists.

IT TAKES TWO, SO DON'T DEAL WITH THIS ALONE

Sarah Berry is a psychosexual and relationship therapist and the house therapist for London's female sexual health institution

Sh! Women's Store.

She says: Women often wrongly believe a low or non-existent sex drive is their problem. But there are two people in a relationship and dealing with it as a team is crucial.

Rather than trying to go from 0 to 60, take small steps. Take sex out of the equation and focus on building intimacy again. There's also no one-size-fits-all solution. For some couples, kissing, holding hands, having a bath together or date nights will help them enjoy each other's company as they did at the start of the relationship. For others, it might be taking up a new hobby or cooking together.

When I meet new clients, I tell them, often to their surprise, NOT to try to have sex straight away. This allows space to talk about what they want from their sex life. It also helps build up desire again.

As new research says that three see their libido plummet, our**Make sex the best****TESTOSTERONE... NOT JUST FOR MEN**

John Studd is a professor of gynaecology based in Wimpole Street, London. An expert in the

female libido, he is renowned for his research on hormone replacement treatment in women.

He says: I always say libido is a mix of head, heart and hormones. If a woman hates her husband then, as gynaecologist, there's little I can do to help. But I can sort hormones – and the results are life-changing.

THE idea that you'd tell your GP about your sex life or loss of libido might seem odd. But it is worth mentioning, as it can be a sign – and sometimes the only one – of an underlying condition that we can treat, such as a thyroid condition, depression and the menopause. Even relatively low-grade mental health problems such as stress can lower sex drive.

Q If you've gone off sex, well, isn't that just a fact of life?

A It is a relatively expected part of long-term relationships, although sometimes, when I hear women talk about losing interest in their husband, I wonder if it's more a self-fulfilling prophecy. I do have patients in their 60s and beyond who have active sex lives.

If a mainly platonic relationship is something partners are happy with,

Adjusting a woman's levels of oestrogen and testosterone should be the first-line treatment if they are suffering from poor libido.

It nearly always works, usually within ten days, and costs about £2 a week on private prescription.

Contrary to popular belief, testo-

sterone is a normal, essential female hormone responsible for energy, mood and libido, which is why depression and loss of libido often go hand in hand. I prescribe female patients oestrogen gel along with testosterone gel.

It's the same gel that men are

NHS treatment of low sexual desire. If there is an underlying condition, we might prescribe drugs to treat those.

Q If I'm menopausal, can I stop using contraception?

A We recommend women continue to use contraception until a year after the menopause. Although it's rare, we do see unwanted pregnancies every year in peri-menopausal women as they can continue to ovulate.

It is also well documented that there has been a rise in sexually transmitted infections in the 50-plus age group, who make up the newly divorced demographic.

The physical changes that occur in women after the menopause actually make them more susceptible to picking up such an infection.

Health COMMENT

By Dr Ellie Cannon



then that's fine too. But if it is a problem that is affecting your quality of life, then it's worth doing something about. GPs can refer NHS patients to psychotherapists who specialise in sex, and also relationship counsellors.

Q What about medication to enhance libido?

A For men, where the problem is likely to be mechanical, we have effective drugs, for instance Viagra. For women, it's a bit more subtle, and there is currently no medication licensed in the UK for