

More Sex Could Mean Less Heart Risk

Study Shows Men Who Have Sex Twice a Week Have Less Risk of Cardiovascular Disease

By [Bill Hendrick](#)

WebMD Health News

Reviewed by [Louise Chang, MD](#)

Jan. 21, 2010 -- Sex isn't just good, it's good for your heart, a new study of men indicates.

Reporting in the *American Journal of Cardiology*, researchers say they've found that men with a low frequency of sexual activity have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Men who reported sexual activity of once a month or less had a higher risk of cardiovascular disease than men who reported having sex twice a week or more, writes study researcher Susan A. Hall, PhD, of the department of epidemiology at the New England Research Institutes.

Previous studies have examined the link between [erectile dysfunction](#) (ED) and cardiovascular disease (CVD), but the new study is the first to look at frequency of sexual activity and heart risk independently from ED, the researchers say.

Hall and colleagues analyzed men taking part in the Massachusetts Male Aging Study, looking at erectile dysfunction plus other sexual function variables, such as libido.

The study included 1,165 men (average age in the 50s) without any history of cardiovascular disease (such as [heart disease](#), [stroke](#), peripheral arterial disease) at the start of the study. Of the participants, 213 had ED at the start of the study. The men were followed for 16 years, on average.

The researchers found that there was an increasing risk of cardiovascular disease with decreasing frequency of reported sexual activity. Compared to men who reported sexual activity at least 2-3 times a week, men with sexual activity of once per month or less had a 45% increased risk of cardiovascular disease during the study period. The findings took into account factors such as age and ED status.

"Our results suggest that a low frequency of sexual activity predicts [cardiovascular disease] independently of [erectile dysfunction] and that screening for sexual activity might be clinically useful," the researchers write.

The researchers also looked at the role of sexual desire and the capacity for sexual activity as possible factors in heart risk. Hall tells WebMD that "men who are sexually active likely have libido and the capacity for physical activity. So the ability to have sex might be a marker for overall health."

Hall also says that "men who are having regular [sexual] activity might be more likely to be in a supportive intimate relationship with a regular partner; this might improve health through [stress](#) reduction and social support."

The study suggests that doctors could get clues about the cardiovascular condition and risk of patients by asking questions about their sex lives, sexual interest, and activities.

"The take-home message for men is that [sexual health](#) may predict cardiovascular health and men should consult with their doctors if they experience erectile dysfunction or sexual difficulties," Hall tells WebMD.

<http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/news/20100121/more-sex-could-mean-less-heart-risk>