Having Problems in Bed? Your Thyroid Could Be to Blame

April 19, 2017

If you're a man experiencing problems in bed, you may want to get checked for underlying thyroid conditions, suggest two new studies published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism (JCEM).

David Samadi, MD, a urologist at New York City'sLenox Hill Hospital, recently discussed the findings—which show both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism may increase men's risk for a variety of sexual problems, including erectile dysfunction, low libido and issues with ejaculation—in his regular column in the Queens Gazette.

Thyroid disorders occur when the body's thyroid gland, a small organ located in the front of the neck that regulates bodily functions, such as metabolism, body temperature, heart rate and blood pressure, doesn't work properly.

An underactive thyroid (known as hypothyroidism) is unable to produce enough thyroid hormones, which can cause fatigue, sensitivity to cold and weight gain. Conversely, an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism) makes too much thyroid hormones and triggers anxiety, a fast heartbeat and sudden weight loss. Researchers conducted studies on both disorders to determine how they affected men's sexual health.

The first study involved 48 adult men: 34 had hyperthyroidism, and 14 had hypothyroidism. Scientists evaluated each of the participants twice for a variety of sexual problems, including low libido, erectile dysfunction (ED), premature ejaculation and delayed ejaculation. First, researchers assessed the men while they were symptomatic and again eight to 16 weeks after their hormone levels had returned to normal levels.

Findings showed that roughly two thirds (64.3 percent) of the men with hypothyroidism experienced low sex drive, delayed ejaculation and ED. Meanwhile, men with hyperthyroidism tended to develop the opposite problem: Fifty percent reported premature ejaculation. A second study also published in JCEM reported that 79 percent of men with either thyroid disorder showed some level of ED.

But there is good news. According to researchers, getting the proper diagnosis and treatment for the illnesses can help normalize thyroid function and reverse most sexual symptoms in men.

(Patience is required, however, as this process could take up to six months for men with dysfunctional thyroids.)

Samadi suggested that men with these disorders watch for sex problems. Additionally, he recommended that men who experience chronic episodes of sexual dysfunction consider getting screened for an underlying thyroid condition.

Think you might have a hormone-related sex issue? Click here to learn more about hyperthyroidism and available treatments for the illness.

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