

# Sexual wellbeing in COPD

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# Overview

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# Introduction

- Sexual activity is an important part of life, identity and general wellbeing
- Many adults including older adults have sexually active lives
- However sexual activity/satisfaction can be influenced by poorer health and ageing
- COPD has been associated with higher rates of sexual dysfunction



# Prevalence – Men

72-87% men with COPD have erectile dysfunction

Study by Collins et al (2012)

- 90 men
- Stable moderate to severe COPD
- 74% had at least one sexual problem
- In addition to erectile dysfunction
  - 37% lack of sexual interest
  - 42% unable to achieve orgasm
  - 28% lack of sexual pleasure

# Prevalence - Women

- Little research into sexual dysfunction in women
- One study showed reduced sexual intimacy, however a very small study

# Causes

- Lower testosterone in men with COPD
- Reduced exercise capacity and general deconditioning
- Shortness of breath related to positioning and activity

# Causes - Psychological

- Beliefs that too old or too sick
- Feeling unattractive/loss of self esteem
- Fear and anxiety
- Depression
- With changing health status - unwillingness or unable to discuss sexual roles and relationship

# Causes - Medication

- Some medications can contribute to sexual dysfunction, decreased sexual desire and/or performance
  - Betablockers, diuretics, antidepressants, antiepileptics, steroids

# Talking about sex

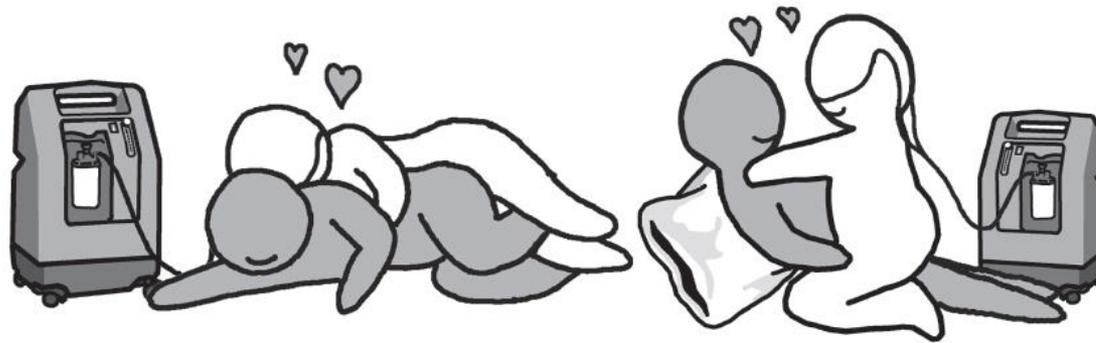
- **PLISSIT** model
- **P**ermission - letting patients and partners know it is acceptable and appropriate to ask questions /concerns about sex
- **L**imited **I**nformation - general information
- **S**pecific **S**uggestions - interventions, advice positioning
- **I**ntensive **T**herapy - referral

# Interventions/Advice

- Cochrane Review – insufficient evidence on medical interventions to improve sexual dysfunction

## Advice

- Improving exercise capacity
- Preparing for sex
- Breathing control and sputum clearance techniques
- Using inhalers
- Fatigue management
- Positioning
- Encouraging conversations
- Reminding that sex is not limited to intercourse



Top Left: 1a. Side lying

Top Right: 1b Recline lying



Bottom Left: 1c. Standing



Bottom Right: 1d. Seated

Levack, W. (2014)

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# References

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