

EAT your way to great SEX

Who knew all it took to stay frisky between the sheets were the right foods? Stock the pantry with these better-sex staples.

BY CHRISTINE NEFF, USA TODAY

A HEALTHY DIET CAN IMPROVE YOUR SEX LIFE by creating overall wellness. Improved heart health, circulation, a boosted immune system, and elevated mood are all directly related to your body's ability to become aroused and reach orgasm," says Kat Van Kirk, clinical sexologist and host of the Sex Chat with Dr. Kat podcast on iTunes.

Los Angeles-based holistic nutritionist Karen Roth saw firsthand what a healthy diet can do for a couple's sex life when she helped her husband, Steve, improve his overall health. Steve chronicles his journey in wellness at imarriedanutritionist.com.

"When you're married to a nutritionist, you get all this great inside information on cleaning up your health," Steve says. Now 52, he says he feels better than ever and often gets compliments on looking young for his age. And of course age has also become less of a factor in the bedroom.



GO NUTS!

In a society focused on low-fat and non-fat foods, people forget that fats are essential to a healthy body, says Karen Roth.

Unsaturated fats, such as **omega-3**, are vital to sexual health. These can be found in **nuts and seeds, fish, spinach, broccoli and cauliflower, beans, and oils such as canola and flaxseed.**

"This is one of the most important—and easiest—things to get into your diet to improve sexual health," she says.

Van Kirk says **omega-3 fatty acids can increase dopamine production, thereby elevating mood and improving the cardiovascular system.**

"Lower incidence of depression contribute to increased libido, while good heart health and circulation assist in arousal and orgasm," Van Kirk says.



ZINC IT UP

Another sure way to increase sexual health is to add zinc to your diet. **Even a mild zinc deficiency can lower sex drive in men.** The mineral is needed for the production of testosterone and healthy sperm.

"Testosterone increases desire and the ability to maintain arousal for both men and women. Zinc helps to increase the levels of free testosterone in the bloodstream," Kat Van Kirk says.

Karen Roth recommends eating **a handful of seeds a day to keep zinc levels high. Pumpkin and sunflower seeds** are tasty, healthy choices. A handful of either provides the daily requirement of zinc for men—15 to 30 milligrams, she says.

Oysters, a celebrated aphrodisiac, are also high in zinc. Just one oyster has the daily recommendation of zinc levels, says Roth.



ACID TRIP

An important acid known as **arginine** helps increase blood flow, release hormones, and dilate blood vessels—even below the belt.

“Arousal is related to increased circulation to the genitals. This is important for both men and women but particularly crucial for men to achieve and maintain erections,” says Kat Van Kirk.

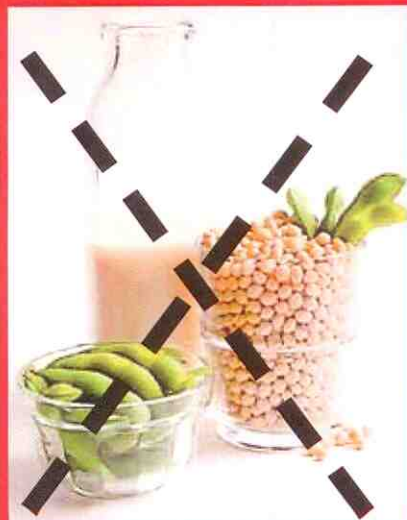
Karen Roth recommends eating **eggs, dairy products, and meat** to add more of this crucial amino acid to your diet. Other sources include **granola, oatmeal, nuts, and chickpeas**.



FEEL-GOOD FOODS

To get in the mood, improve your mood. Known as the happy hormone, levels of **serotonin** in the brain greatly affect mood.

High-protein foods help stimulate serotonin production, says Karen Roth. **Lean meats such as lamb, lean beef, fish, chicken, and even turkey** can give off a feel-good boost.



WHAT TO STEER CLEAR OF

Be careful to avoid foods that can detract from sexual performance. **Alcohol** might loosen you up, but it can also suppress testosterone production.

Soy products have been shown to suppress testosterone while increasing estrogen levels in men, Karen Roth says. She has worked with male clients who had a hormonal imbalance due to too much soy in the diet.

“One wife said her husband had become ‘the best friend I never wanted.’ He became like a girlfriend to her, and I know it was hormonal,” Roth says. A look at the man’s diet revealed a glass of soymilk at every meal. By cutting back on soy, the client righted his hormone levels—and his wife got her husband back.

FOODS FOR FERTILITY



It’s not just about marathon sex. Cut your risk of other sexual health issues like infertility and prostate cancer simply by changing the way you eat.

> SATURATED FATS

affect fertility and a man’s likelihood of dying from prostate cancer. And trans fats can hinder fertility: A recent study showed that men with higher amounts of trans fats in their sperm tend to have dramatically lower sperm concentrations, says Jorge Chavarro, author of *The Fertility Diet* and assistant professor at the Harvard School of Public Health.

> Many foods and vitamins can improve fertility. Eating more fruits and vegetables can be helpful. **FOLATE**, a vitamin found in leafy greens, can improve sperm concentration.

> **CAFFEINE** can be a good thing, too. Caffeine gives sperm the same boost in energy and speed that it gives the mind, which can affect fertility, studies show. And men who drink more coffee are less likely to develop prostate cancer, according to a new study released by Harvard researchers.