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Sexual function and exercise in postmenopausal women

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Background: The sexual function of menopausal women is influenced by several factors.

Objectives: We aimed to investigate the association between exercise and sexual function among postmenopausal women residing in Northern Iran.

Patients and Methods: Using a multistage, randomized sampling method, 405 postmenopausal women, aged 40 to 65 years, were recruited to participate in this population-based, cross sectional study. The female sexual function index (FSFI) questionnaire and a researcher designed questionnaire were completed by every subject.

Results: Overall, 61% of the women reported having experienced sexual dysfunction, and 53.6% reported that they had not performed any kind of exercise within the last 6 months; among those who did exercise, the most common form was walking (79.8%). The FSFI total scores ($P = 0.013$), as well as the scores in the lubrication ($P = 0.007$) and pain ($P < 0.001$) domains, were significantly lower for the women who performed exercises other than walking compared to those who only walked or who did not exercise at all. The frequency of weekly exercise had a positive correlation with the scores in the lubrication ($r = 0.18$, $P = 0.014$) and orgasm ($r = 0.146$, $P = 0.045$) domains. The logistic regression analysis demonstrated that the chances of reduced sexual desire were decreased by 80.2% ($P = 0.044$) with every unit increase in the frequency of weekly exercise.

Conclusions: More frequent exercise will improve the sexual function of post-menopausal women.