

Older women lack important information about sexual health

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Many women over 50 years old date and are sexually active and thereby face many possible health risks. Yet, most educational campaigns designed to prevent sexually transmitted diseases target younger generations. Older women also need and want more information about sexual health and wellness. A study in the new special issue of the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* on older consumers found a critical need for improving communication between older women and their physicians about sexual health and for providing these women with tools on how to negotiate with partners about safe sex practices.

Dr. Cynthia Morton and her colleagues at the University of Florida examined women's knowledge about sexual health and their concerns about safe sex practices as they continue to pursue active sex lives into their senior years. Women aged 50 years and older participated in focus group discussions to talk about the challenges in finding [male partners](#), negotiating condom use, and seeking credible information sources to help them make the best decisions about sexual health.

Results of the study revealed that older women are aware of the risks for sexually transmitted diseases yet are uncomfortable about seeking sexual health information from their regular physicians who may erroneously believe that they already possess the knowledge. Although older women know the importance of condoms in preventing sexually transmitted diseases, they may avoid negotiating [condom use](#) with their partners in an effort to avoid conflict or rejection. Senior-aged women are receptive to strategies that give them tools for negotiating with partners and for

communicating with their physicians, but there are limited resources directed to their age group.

"The findings generated from our research offer a rich foundation for better understanding the motivations and concerns that influence senior-aged women's attitudes about dating at their present stage of life," said Morton.

According to the authors, efforts are needed to help older women gain confidence to talk with primary care physicians about sexual health and to make those physicians aware of their need. The authors also call for social marketing campaigns that aim to educate [older women](#) about their [sexual health](#) risks and encourage them to take greater ownership in the negotiation of [safe sex](#) practices with their partners.

Provided by Wiley

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