

# Effects of Marijuana Use on Sexual Function in Women

*A commentary on Lynn et al. "The Relationship Between Marijuana Use Prior to Sex and Sexual Function in Women." Sex Med. 2019;7(2):192-197.*

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Currently, there is a huge divide between the resources allocated to sexual health in men and women.<sup>1</sup> There are a vast number of erectile dysfunction medications on the market for men vs only 2 medications approved for low libido in premenopausal women. Interestingly, of the 2 medications for women, 1 must be taken every day, and the other is an injection administered 45 minutes before sexual activity.<sup>2,3</sup>

The use of cannabis as a sexual wellness medication represents a much-needed breakthrough in female sexual enhancement. This retrospective review by Lynn et al. represents a great initial general assessment into the effectiveness of cannabis as a sexual arousal and satisfaction tool.<sup>4</sup>

## Study Design and Key Findings

Lynn et al. analyzed survey data from 373 women, including 127 (34%) who reported using marijuana before sexual activity and 49 (13%) who used marijuana but not before sex. Among marijuana users, 68% of those who used it before sex reported satisfying orgasms vs 53% of those who did not use marijuana before sex (adjusted odds ratio [aOR], 2.13;  $P=0.04$ ). Additionally, the effect on orgasms was associated with the frequency of marijuana use, with 71% of frequent users reporting satisfying orgasms vs 58% of infrequent marijuana users (aOR, 2.10;  $P=0.02$ ). Furthermore, a majority of women who used marijuana before sex reported that its use improved the overall sexual experience (69%), increased their sex drive (61%), and increased the number of satisfying orgasms (52.8%).

Cannabis' ability to decrease stress and inhibition, increase confidence and sensation, decrease pain, and prolong the perception of time all directly apply to the most common causes of sexual dysfunction in women.<sup>5</sup> A positive effect on

sex drive, orgasm, and overall sexual experience was reported in women who use cannabis—interestingly, the same effect was seen whether or not cannabis use was initiated directly before sexual activity, which bears further investigation.

## Study Limitations

A majority of women in the study who used marijuana before sex did not report a positive effect on lubrication. As opposed to the other measures, which all had a clear moderate to large increase with cannabis use, lubrication outcomes were clearly divided into "a lot" and "a little," with no in-between margin. It would be interesting to know if there was an underlying contributing factor to this division (ie, menopausal status, underlying medical conditions, etc).

In addition, the majority of patients in this study smoked cannabis, as opposed to using a topical or vaginal form of administration, which would also be an interesting topic for further research, as local administration may have a more measurable effect on lubrication and pain outcomes than inhaled administration.

## Conclusion

This study represents a significant shift in the application of medical cannabis specifically for women's health and wellness, which is a much needed and welcome change in the previous trend of the primarily male-focused sexual wellness space.

## References

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5. Phillips NA. Female sexual dysfunction: evaluation and treatment. *Am Fam Physician.* 2000;62(1):127-136.

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—*Stacia Woodcock, PharmD*