



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL SURVEY SHOWS 70% OF WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED A SEXUAL HEALTH ISSUE

Women Say Sexual Health Issues Impact Multiple Aspects of Their Lives

Washington, DC, June 25, 2009 – A new survey released today shows 70 percent of women report having experienced a sexual health issue, of which twenty-two percent felt very or extremely concerned. The survey also found that many women claim they would be comfortable talking to a health care provider about a sexual health issue, but less than one-fifth (18%) actually visited their health care provider when they experienced one.

The survey, commissioned by the National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP), was designed to explore women's attitudes and behaviors regarding their sexual health.

The survey defined "sexual health issue" as any of the following six conditions: a lack of desire to engage in sexual activity, not being able to become sexually aroused, not being able to have an orgasm, pain during intercourse, excessive desire to engage in sexual activity, or vaginal dryness.

Respondents who experienced sexual health issues reported negative impacts on their romantic relationships (44%), self-esteem (43%), and mental health (42%). These women also found that sexual health issues caused stress and anxiety (66%) and affected their sleeping habits (28%) and their weight (25%).

"Given the number of women who experience sexual health issues, it is important to provide them with accurate, unbiased information on conditions they may encounter throughout their lifetime," said Elizabeth Battaglini Cahill, RN, executive director of NWHRC. "Fortunately, many sexual health issues can be successfully addressed through education, lifestyle changes, counseling and treatment, and we encourage women to talk with their partner and their health care provider."

To help women learn more about healthy female sexuality and encourage them to talk about issues they may have, NWHRC and ARHP have joined forces with support from Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., to develop a new educational campaign titled, "Sex and a Healthier You." The campaign seeks to provide accurate information and advance positive sexual health messages by raising awareness about sexual function as a natural and valued aspect of women's lives. Additionally, the program aims to increase the level of meaningful and effective communication between women and their health care providers and women and their partners.

Sexual Health Defined

While definitions of sexual health vary, the majority of respondents define being sexually healthy as having a satisfying sex life (79%), having a good relationship with their partner (78%), and experiencing sexual desire (65%).

Moreover, three-quarters of the women surveyed believe they should have sex once a week or more to be considered sexually healthy (76%). Findings show; however, that only half actually had sex this often over the last four weeks (54%).

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Where Women Turn for Sexual Health Information

When women need information about sexual health issues, they first turn to the Internet (35%), followed closely by their partner (32%). Many women say they would be comfortable talking to a health care provider about a sexual health issue, but less than one-fifth (18%) actually visited their health care provider when they experienced one. Additionally, the survey found that women who frequently visit their doctors are more likely to visit a health care provider about a sexual health issue.

“Health care providers today have more resources than ever to help women understand and maximize their healthy sexuality throughout the age span,” said Dr. Beth Jordan, ARHP’s medical director. “It is critical for women to understand the basics of the female sexual response and the myriad, and often emotional, factors that impact their sense of sexuality.”

For more information about the “Sex and a Healthier You” campaign, log on to www.SexandaHealthierYou.org.

This survey was sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (BIPI).

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About the Survey

The National Women’s Health Resource Center (NWHRC), in partnership with the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP), commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct an online survey to explore women’s attitudes, behaviors and perceptions regarding their sexuality. This survey was conducted online within the United States between March 4-13, 2009 among 1,209 women aged 18-50 who reside in the U.S. Of the 1,209 women who participated in this survey, 254 were African American, 252 were Hispanic, and 125 were Asian American. The survey was sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (BIPI).

About NWHRC

The not-for-profit National Women’s Health Resource Center is the leading independent health information source for women. NWHRC develops and distributes up-to-date and objective women’s health information based on the latest advances in medical research and practice, all of which is reviewed by leading medical specialists in the field. NWHRC believes all women should have access to the most trusted and reliable health information. Information empowers women to make the best decisions to maintain and improve their health and the health of their families. For more information, visit www.healthywomen.org

About ARHP

The Association of Reproductive Health Professionals is a non-profit membership association comprised of highly qualified and committed experts in reproductive health. Its members are professionals who provide reproductive health services and education, conduct reproductive health research, and influence reproductive health policy, and they include physicians, advanced practice clinicians (nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and physician assistants), researchers, educators, pharmacists, and other professionals in reproductive health. The organization reaches this broad range of health care professionals both in the US and abroad with education and information about reproductive health science, practice, and policy. For more information, visit www.arhp.org.

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive is a global leader in custom market research. With a long and rich history in multimodal research that is powered by our science and technology, we assist clients in achieving business results. Harris Interactive serves clients globally through our North American, European and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms. For more information, please visit www.harrisinteractive.com

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