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Working out builds women's sexual drive

By Marilyn Elias
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SAN FRANCISCO — Exercise boosts many women's ability to become sexually aroused, and strengthens their confidence as lovers, says a new survey out Saturday.

The USA-wide study of 8,500 aerobic exercisers will be released by Los Angeles psychologist Linda DeVillers at a meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex.

Of the women surveyed, 83 percent did some aerobic exercise ~~three or more times a~~ week, most for more than three months. Findings:

- ▶ 40 percent say their capacity to be sexually aroused has been enhanced since they started exercising; less than 3 percent feel less turned-on.

- ▶ 98 percent say working out lifts their overall self-confidence; 89 percent report a boost in sexual self-confidence.

- ▶ 25 percent report that their desire has increased, and 31 percent say they're making love more often.

Physical changes could partly explain these results, DeVillers says. "Exercise increases endorphins, the natural chemicals that make you feel good, but we don't know exactly how that affects sexual pleasure."

Mental well-being is also involved: "You've got a natural anti-depressant in exercise," DeVillers says. "If you feel better about yourself . . . you're going to be more receptive to a lot of things, including sex."