Purpose: Identify the knowledge gaps in sexual health among adults 50+.

Methods: This systematic review used various databases, including PubMed, CINAHL, EBSCO Discovery, Google Scholar, CSUF’s Pollak Library OneSearch, Science Direct, and SpringerLink Journals. Key terms searched were: sexual health, aging population, STIs, STDs, older adults, aging generation, infectious diseases, sex, and aging.

Scope: Inclusion criteria incorporated articles published between 1996 and 2022 that addressed sexual health/diseases (STIs/STDs) in adults aged 50+.

Results: Twenty-four articles met the inclusion criteria. Overall, trends point to a rise in STIs/STDs in the aging population. The research identified risk factors, including a lack of resources on aging and sexual health, clinical absence of doctor-patient discussions of sexual health, and a lack of routine screening/testing and health education for populations aged 50+. Common healthcare misconceptions of older adults persist in clinical practice, such as believing this cohort is asexual, does not need to be screened, or needs tailored sexual health education. The social stigma of aging and sex also contributes to the scarcity of factual knowledge and accurate statistics/data on STDs/STIs in 50+ adults.

Conclusion: Given the rise in incidence rates of STIs/STDs in aging populations worldwide, there is a critical need to address sexual health in aging populations 50+ and destigmatizing sex/sexual health among those 50+. Additional research is also needed to examine how healthcare providers approach this topic. Three tangible recommendations that emerged from this systematic review are (1) routinize STI/STD screening as part of primary care for older patients; (2) encourage healthcare providers to have conversations about sexual health with their patients; and (3) improve the capacity of health educators to address risky sexual health behaviors with aging populations from a public health approach.