

What You Should Know About Dyspareunia

What is dyspareunia?

Dyspareunia (DIS-puh-ROO-nee-uh) is pain that occurs during sex. The pain may begin the first time you have sex, or it can begin later. The pain may be near or in the opening of the vagina or deep inside your pelvis. It may feel like a muscle spasm that makes entry into the vagina difficult. Anxiety or fear of the pain may also occur.

What causes it?

Many conditions can cause it. Infections, skin conditions, and scar tissue in the vagina can all cause pain during sex. Normal changes after childbirth or after menopause can make sex painful. Other conditions of the uterus, bladder, or colon also can cause pain during sex.

What can I expect when I see my doctor?

Your doctor will ask questions about your pain, such as where it is, what makes it worse, and if you have other symptoms. Your doctor will do a pelvic exam. You may need to have other tests, such as an ultrasound or a blood draw, to help your doctor find the cause.

How is it treated?

Your doctor will find out what is causing your pain. The treatment will depend on the diagnosis. You may need to see a physical therapist. Your doctor may recommend using lubrication during sex. For some causes, your doctor may recommend surgery.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/dyspareunia/causes-risk-factors.html>

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

<http://www.acog.org/~media/For%20Patients/faq020.pdf?dmc=1&ts=20130609T1402266671>

Harvard Medical School

<http://patienteducationcenter.org/articles/painful-sexual-intercourse-dyspareunia>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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