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Sexual Dysfunctions

It's hard to know whether the increased statistics in sexual dysfunctions is due to our more complex and stressful world, or whether it results from our increased awareness of satisfying our partner's needs. Since the field of remedying sexual dysfunctions is a vast one, this review will not be an extensive investigation into all of the causes and therapies involved with treating these problems, but rather a survey of identifying these wide-ranging issues. If you, or your partner, are victims of these difficulties, it is important for you to seek out qualified professional therapists to assist you.

Male Problems

Usually this area relates to the man's inability to achieve or maintain an erection, which is now termed erectile dysfunction (ED). With the advent of Viagra and other similar products, this issue has been greatly improved for many men. Aside from these circumstances, other problems that men experience often are emotional issues that require therapeutic counseling.

Female Problems

Women of all ages experience problems with communicating their needs with their partner, having feelings of anger, or lack of trust that can result in the blocking of sexual desire and failure to be "in the mood." Because of this, sexual dysfunction is highly linked with negative experiences in sexual relationships.

Sexual dysfunction is more common for women (43%) than men (31%) and is associated with a variety of age and educational achievement characteristics. Another factor may be a lack of sexual fantasies to motivate the woman to either initiate sex or seek sexual stimulation.

Middle-aged Women (40-60 years old)

A weak libido (lack of interest in sex) is the most common problem women experience. Other difficulties are anxiety, chronic stress, financial pressures, physical/mental exhaustion, or substance abuse. And there are also real physical issues such as lack of natural lubrication (usually after menopause) and low hormone levels.

There have been recent studies that prove the effectiveness of testosterone supplementation in stimulating a low sex drive in women. (See **Tips For Retaining Sex Drive** (*Testosterone Improves Women's Sex Lives*)).

For the problem of lack of natural lubrication (can result in pain during intercourse), there have been new medications that look hopeful for increasing blood flow to the genitalia and others to improve arousal and lubrication.

Younger Women

Depression has been identified as a cause for reduced sex drive. Studies show that depression often affects about 12% of all women. Is this emotional issue influencing you? Failure to achieve orgasm can also be due to prescription anti-depressant medications, especially the selective-serotonin-reuptake-inhibitors (SSRI). Prozac, Zoloft and Paxil, which many women use, are estimated to cause diminished libido in as much as 60% of patients.

Also affecting the supply of natural hormones are birth control pills. Realize this relates to women on an individual basis (it may affect you but not your best friend).

And, of course, any victim of sexual coercion (forced sex, molestation, incest, rape – not matter how limited it was) requires counseling from a qualified sex therapist.

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The Art of Orgasm

Another factor with young women is learning to use your body's muscles to achieve an orgasm. While some women learn this process through early sexual experience, a significant percentage of women do not (experiencing orgasm is not something we are born knowing). Most sex therapists advise women to practice masturbation in order to familiarize themselves on the use of the pc muscles (*pubococcygeus*) whether by manual stimulation, electric vibrator or kegel exercisers.

Sometimes, a lack of experience may also be an issue for a middle-aged woman, who has been a mother of children for years and who never learned to enjoy sexuality before she bore children. Many women in this situation are uncomfortable with discussing and exploring the sexual techniques that might bring on or intensify an orgasm.

For more information about developing the pc muscles for achieving orgasm through the use of Kegel exercises, see in this section **Ways For Women To Promote Sexual Pleasure: Advice for Stronger Orgasms.**

Additional Factors

Sexual Arousal Disorder

This is a term for physical problems that block a women's body from responding naturally. Examples of these problems can be the aftereffects of:

- Pelvic surgeries, hysterectomies or childbirth complications that have caused nerve damage or vascular damage.
- Blood flow diseases like coronary heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol can reduce blood flow to the genitalia, or may indirectly produce problems (through medications), which adversely affect the normal stages of excitement and orgasm.
- Vaginal pain due to prior infections, surgeries, or vaginal thinning due to age.
- Involuntary contraction of the muscles in the outer vaginal area.
- Vaginal pain due to urinary infections from yeast, bacteria or parasites.

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