

Getting More Help with Sexual Concerns

Talking openly and honestly about sex is difficult for most people. Many people find that it is embarrassing to ask their doctor or other health care professionals about sexual topics.

It is also true that many health professionals have a difficult time bringing up the topic of sex. Almost all health professionals believe that sexuality is an important component of human life and that people with disabilities have a right to accurate information about changes to sexuality. Unfortunately, their own cultural values and beliefs, their fear that they do not know all the answers and other demands on their time may interfere with them bringing the topic up.

Asking for help

Remember that you have a right to accurate and supportive information about the changes to sexuality you may experience and what can be done about the changes. It is normal to feel a little embarrassed about asking questions about sex. You can even begin by saying, “I’m a little embarrassed to bring this up, but I was wondering what might happen when I want to have sex again?”

It is important to be able to have open discussion about sexual health and sexual concerns with your health care team. Good communication can help you to deal with any concerns or questions that may be getting in the way of your sexual health. The desire for love, intimacy and pleasure is universal and having a satisfying sexual relationship contributes to health and feelings of well-being.

Everyone has the right to have their questions answered and to have their sexual concerns addressed. If past experiences with sex have been negative or harmful it is important to get help.

Like many things in our lives, talking about sex in an open, respectful way gets easier the more we practice it.

Here are some ideas to help you ask questions about sex:

- I have noticed (*name the problem as specifically as you can*) and I am worried about it. Is there anything I can do or someone I can talk to who can help me with this?
- Does this injury or disability have any sexual or relationship implications?
- Does this treatment or medication have any sexual side effects?
- You can also try writing down some of your questions ahead of time and giving it to your doctor or rehab team member.

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Other sources of information

Ask your doctor or rehab team for a referral to the Sexual Health Service at GF Strong.

Find books or magazines about disability and sexuality and do some reading on your own. Medical information can change quickly so when you are looking for books try to make sure that they were published fairly recently.

If you have access to the internet you can look up a great deal of useful information that may help you. As with all information on the internet, some sources are less reliable than others. Before you try anything recommended on a website you should check with your health care team to make sure that the information does apply to you and is safe.

Keeping up with medical advances

Being in charge of your own health is important and finding ways to stay up to date, either by reading books and magazines relating to your specific disability or by occasionally searching for new information on the internet, will lead to a better quality of life for you.

Medical Disclaimer: The above information is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always ask your physician or other qualified health professional about any matter concerning your individual health.

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For further information: Contact the Sexual Health Rehab Service, GF Strong Rehab Centre