

Sexual Advice Association

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Explaining sexual problems to your doctor or health professional: information they need to know

Discussing sexual problems with a doctor or health professional can be embarrassing. However it is important not to suffer in silence. Sexual problems can badly affect your quality of life and erectile dysfunction (ED) with men, for example, is now thought to be an early marker of heart disease. Doctors will not be judging your sex life but need to have information to be able to come to a diagnosis and recommend treatment. ***All information you give will be strictly confidential and not given to anyone else, even a spouse or parent without your permission.*** Here are a few tips to make it easier to talk about your problem and a guide to what your doctor or health professional needs to know.

Describing the problem

You need to explain exactly what the problem is rather than making your own diagnosis, as this can lead to the doctor coming to the wrong conclusion. You will also need to explain:

- How long you have had the problem and how it affects you and your relationship
- Your current partner's age and sex
- If you have several partners, whether the problem with a particular one
- Whether you've had problems with previous partners
- If your partners has a problem
- The type of intercourse you have– vaginal, oral or anal
- Whether you have ever been sexually abused or assaulted, as an adult or as a child

Contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

- What type of contraception you and your partner use
- Whether you use condoms with a new partner, even though you do not need to for contraception
- If you have concerns about STIs
- Whether you have had an STI in the past and how you were treated
- Whether you have attended a genitor-urinary clinic

Past medical problems

- If you've had any surgery in the genital area, such as prostate or lower bowel or had a hysterectomy
- For women: when last period occurred and how frequent, heavy or painful your periods are; pregnancy and childbirth problems
- Any other medical problems such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, depression
- If you take any medication such as tablets, injections, patches or inhalers
- If you take any recreational drugs such as cannabis, cocaine or LSD
- Whether there are any pressures or stresses at home or at work
- Who else is living with you at home

What do you want to do?

- Do you want to try drug therapy? If so, think about what preparation would suit you best
- Do you want to have counselling? If so, think about where you would like to go and what type of therapist you would like to see.

The discussion with your doctor or health professional may be over several appointments and should lead to you agreeing to a management plan that suits you.

An invitation

..... to enrol as a friend of The Sexual Advice Association. For a small annual subscription you will know that you are contributing to a charity that helps overcome the problems of male and female sexual dysfunction. If you are interested please telephone or write for an application form or complete our on-line registration form.

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