

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

September 2011

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 have 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

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.

Where can you get more information?

The Sexual Advice Association is here to help. We cannot give individual medical advice, but we can answer your questions on any sexual problems and put you in touch with local specialist practitioners. We also have a number of factsheets and booklets on sexual problems and related issues for men and women that can be downloaded from our website or requested. Please feel free to email us or phone our Helpline (our contact details are at the bottom of this page).

You can also visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/ for information and advice on many different health and lifestyle topics.

Donate

By donating to the Sexual Advice Association, you will know that you are helping improve the lives of people living with sexual problems. If you are interested in donating, please click [here](#) or contact us for more information (details at the bottom of this page).

Thinking About Sex Day: February 14th

Launched by the Sexual Advice Association, Thinking About Sex Day (TASD) is designed to encourage everyone to think about the physical and psychological issues surrounding sexual activity.

