

FAST FACTS: SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

What is a normal sex life? Is my sex life normal? These are questions that many women ask themselves daily due to problems with sexual dysfunction.

Plain and simple — no one likes to talk about their sexual problems, but 40 percent of women in the United States report experiencing difficulty with arousal, desire, and pain during sex. The first step is talking with your healthcare provider.

WHAT, WHY, HOW?

Sexual dysfunction is a general term for a problem with interest in or responses to sex. Sex doesn't always start with desire, leading to arousal and then an orgasm. Sometimes the physical desire to have sex does not occur in women until after the sexual activity has started. There are multiple physiological reasons why women experience problems with desire, arousal, orgasms, or sexual pain, including:

- aging
- hormonal changes due to menopause, pregnancy, or menstrual cycle
- cardiovascular disease
- neurological conditions
- certain medications
- stress, anxiety, or depression
- chronic pain or headaches
- smoking, alcohol, and drugs affecting sexual responses

TREATMENT

- Low-dose vaginal estrogen therapy
- Pelvic floor physical therapy
- Emotional support

SELF-HELP TIPS

If sexual dysfunction is causing you distress, disrupting your well-being, or creating problems in your relationship with your partner, these self-help tips may help:

- communicate with your partner
- change positions to increase comfort
- increase foreplay
- use lubricants
- practice a healthy lifestyle

If you are experiencing symptoms of sexual dysfunction, please talk to your primary care provider about treatment options.

