

sex
& A HEALTHIER
YOU

Understanding Your
Sexual Health



To help women learn more about female sexual health and encourage them to talk about related issues they may have, the National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP), have joined forces to develop a new educational campaign titled, **"Sex and a Healthier You."**

The campaign seeks to provide relevant information and advance positive sexual health messages by raising awareness about sexual function as a natural and valued aspect of women's lives. Additionally, the program aims to increase the level of meaningful and effective communication between women and their health care providers and women and their partners.

For more information about "Sex and a Healthier You," log on to www.SexandaHealthierYou.org.

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Sexual Health and Well-Being

Sexual health can be an important part of overall health. Being sexually healthy can mean different things for different women. It might mean being satisfied with your sex life, having a good relationship with your partner or experiencing sexual desire.

Unfortunately, according to a recent survey, many women don't talk to their partner or health care provider when they experience an issue with their sexual health.

We realize sex can often be a sensitive topic to discuss with your partner and/or health care provider. This brochure provides some background on sexual health issues to help you get that conversation started. We also encourage you to visit www.SexandaHealthierYou.org where you will find helpful tips, answers to potentially uncomfortable questions, and information you can understand.



Questions to Get You Started

When it comes to topics like your own sexual health, sometimes it's hard to know where to begin. We've provided you with some questions to prepare you for a discussion with your doctor.

- Are you sexually active?
- If no, does that bother you?
- If yes, then do you or your partner have a question, problem or concern about your sexual activity?
- Have there been any recent changes in your sex life?
- Do you have any discomfort or problems with intercourse?
- Are you having any difficulties such as decreased vaginal lubrication, pain with intercourse, difficulty having an orgasm, or diminished sexual desire?
- If you're taking medication, are there any potential sexual response side effects?
- If you have a chronic illness or disease, could it be causing a sexual health issue?
- Are bodily changes related to menopause causing your sexual problem? What can be done to minimize those effects?
- Could counseling help with your sexual problem? If so, who can you contact?



Understanding Female Sexual Dysfunction

Female sexual dysfunction (FSD) includes a variety of conditions which can affect a woman's sexual health and cause distress.

These include:

- Sexual desire disorders (e.g., Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (HSDD), which is a persistent or recurrent lack of desire to engage in sexual activity)
- Sexual arousal disorders (e.g., not being able to become sexually aroused)
- Orgasmic disorders (e.g., not being able to have an orgasm)
- Sexual pain disorders (e.g., Dyspareunia, Vaginismus, or pain during intercourse)
- Sexual dysfunction due to a general medical condition
- Sexual dysfunction due to a psychiatric condition (such as mood or anxiety disorders)
- Substance induced sexual dysfunction, due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (i.e. antidepressants)
- Sexual dysfunction from an unknown cause



Sexual health issues are common and affect women of all ages at any stage of life. According to a national survey, 70 percent of women have experienced a sexual health issue. Lack of desire was the most commonly reported sexual health issue.

Sexual health issues impact many aspects of a woman's life. Women surveyed who experienced sexual health issues said it negatively affected their romantic relationships (44%), self-esteem (43%), and mental health (42%). Sexual health issues also caused stress and anxiety (66%), and affected sleeping habits (28%) and weight (25%).

Although many women claimed they would be comfortable talking to a health care provider about a sexual health issue, less than one-fifth (18%) actually visited their health care provider when they experienced one.

NWHRC, in partnership ARHP, commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct an online survey to explore women's attitudes, behaviors and perceptions regarding their sexuality. This survey was conducted within the United States in March 2009 among 1,209 women aged 18-50. The survey was sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.



Every Woman is Entitled to a Satisfying, Healthy Sex Life

Dialogue about sexual health should be an integral part of routine patient care. Unfortunately, many women may be hesitant to talk to their health care provider about sexual issues because of discomfort or embarrassment.



If you have a sexual health issue, here are a few tips you can follow:

- Take it seriously. Sexual health issues can affect various aspects of your life; it's important you address them. It can be helpful to take notice of what makes you feel sexually satisfied.
- Write down your concerns. If you're nervous or embarrassed, bring a list of your concerns to the appointment. Use whatever words you are comfortable with in conveying the issue.
- Make an appointment with your health care provider. It should be someone you feel comfortable talking with about your sexual health. This may be your ob/gyn, primary care physician (PCP) or a sexual health expert.
- Be specific. Don't just discuss the problem itself, note how it might affect you and your relationship with your partner.
- Visit www.SexandaHealthierYou.org. There, you will find additional information that can help get this conversation started.



About NWHRC

The not-for-profit National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) is the leading independent health information source for women. NWHRC develops and distributes up-to-date and objective women's health information based on the latest advances in medical research and practice, all of which is reviewed by leading medical specialists in the field. NWHRC believes all women should have access to the most trusted and reliable health information. Information empowers women to make the best decisions to maintain and improve their health and the health of their families.

For more information, visit www.healthywomen.org

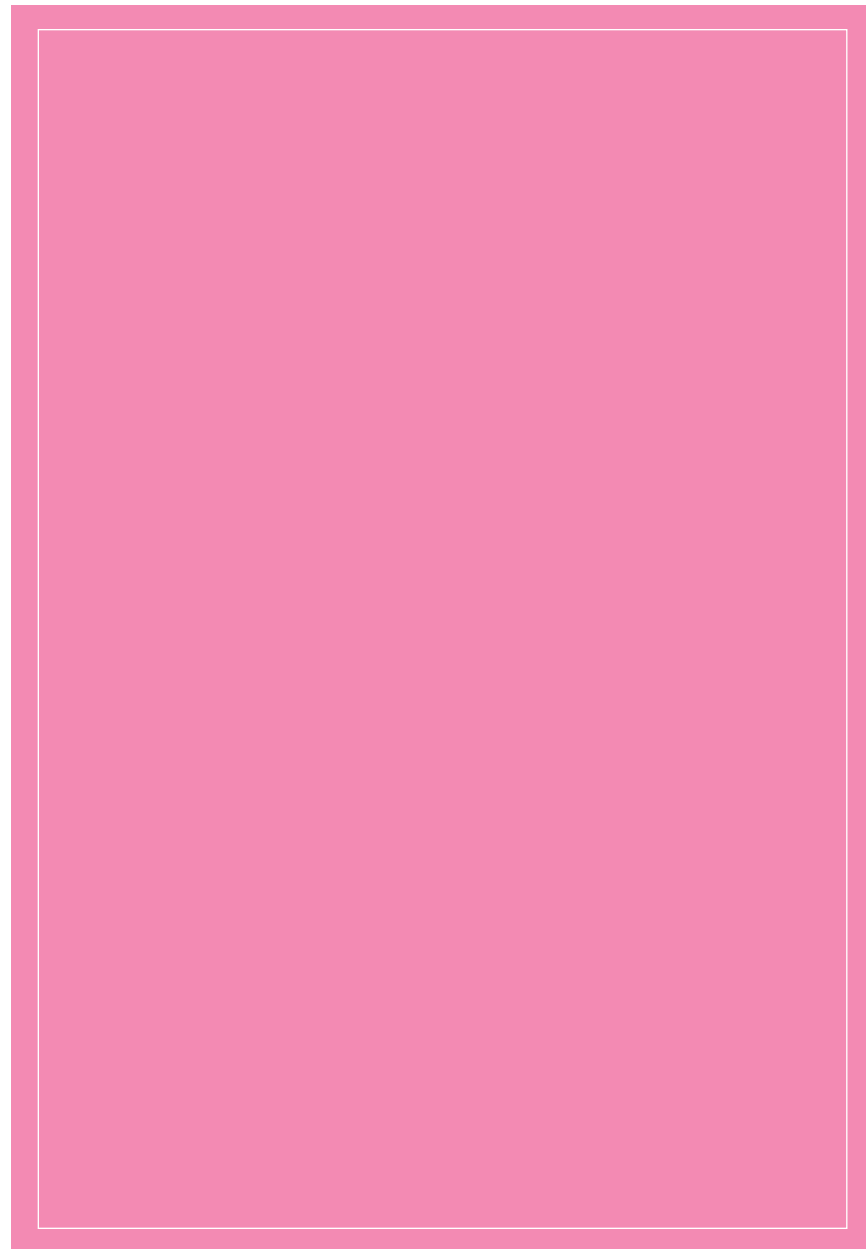


About ARHP

The Association of Reproductive Health Professionals is a non-profit membership association comprised of highly qualified and committed experts in reproductive health. Its members are professionals who provide reproductive health services and education, conduct reproductive health research, and influence reproductive health policy, and they include physicians, advanced practice clinicians (nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and physician assistants), researchers, educators, pharmacists, and other professionals in reproductive health. The organization reaches this broad range of health care professionals both in the US and abroad with education and information about reproductive health science, practice, and policy.

For more information, visit www.arhp.org

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