

SaferSex4Seniors

Information you need to enjoy safer sexual pleasure

How to Talk with Your Doctor about Sex

Q. I'm embarrassed to discuss my sex life with my doctor, but I have questions.

If you can discuss your indigestion and bowel habits with your doctor, you can discuss sex! Don't wait until your doctor is ready to leave the room. Bring up your question or concern during your exam, in case the doctor needs to look at your body to answer the question. Let your doctor know that your sexuality is important to you, and you need to know how medications or procedures might have sexual side effects.

Q. My doctor got embarrassed when I asked about changes in my sexual desire. What should I do?

By acknowledging that this is a difficult topic, you might help your doctor be more open to discussing your concerns. If your doctor can't give you useful answers or seems judgmental, find another doctor. Urologists specialize in men's sexual health concerns; gynecologists specialize in women's sexual health concerns. Sex therapists address psychological and relationship concerns. Sexuality educators provide information and practical suggestions. You can find certified sex therapists and sexuality educators at www.AASECT.org

Q. I have a same-sex partner, and I worry that my doctor won't approve of my sexual orientation.

Many lesbians, gays and bisexuals have this concern, and sadly, some doctors are not accepting of non-heterosexual patients. It is ideal to be completely honest about your sexual history, but if you feel unsafe disclosing the truth, you can look for an open-minded doctor, or you can keep your orientation secret. Just be honest about the type of sexual activities you participate in so you can be assessed properly and, if necessary, be tested and treated for sexually transmitted infection (STI). People of any orientation may enjoy oral sex, body rubbing, anal sex, mutual masturbation, etc., so a discussion of your sexual activities will not reveal your orientation.

Q. I enjoy sex play that could be called kinky. Does my doctor need to know?

You need only mention activities that could affect your health. If you have circulatory problems, being tied up could be risky. If you have heart problems, physically stressful sex may need to be modified. If you have blood-clotting issues, you may need to avoid activities that could break the skin. If you have multiple partners you are at higher risk for STIs. Your doctor can alert you to health concerns; a sex therapist or sexuality educator can help you modify your favorite activities so you can continue to enjoy them.

Q. My doctor is always in a rush, and there isn't time to discuss sex during my visits.

Doctors have little time to spend with each patient, so they focus on acute health issues. Sexual concerns often take longer to discuss. To ensure that all of your concerns are addressed, schedule a visit specifically related to sexual issues. If it's an urgent matter, let the doctor know!

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