

This is the inability of either or both partners to fully enjoy sexual intercourse.

What to look for

For men, you may have a sexual problem if you:

- ejaculate prematurely
- do not ejaculate.
- are unable to have sustain an erection;
- feel pain during intercourse.
- lack sexual desire consistently

For women, you may have a sexual problem if you:

- lack sexual desire consistently.
- have difficulty achieving orgasm.
- feel anxiety or pain during intercourse.
- feel vaginal or other muscles contract involuntarily before or during sex.
- have inadequate lubrication.

It can be traumatic for couples who are unable to fully enjoy sexual intercourse. The affects this can have upon the relationship itself can be distressing as well as the implications it may have for the conception of children.

This type of problem is common. And while it is not often fatal, it can drain both partners emotionally and cause stress and anxiety. It is wise to seek professional help for this problem.

Men are often anxious and feel under pressure to perform and to 'give' their partner an orgasm. If this does not happen, he may feel inadequate.

Another common sexual problem for men is premature ejaculation, in which orgasm occurs before or immediately after the penis enters the vagina.

Although quite rare, it is possible for men to consistently ejaculate too late.

The inability to experience pleasure from sex is a common problem for a woman. This should be talked over with a therapist and your partner.

Another similar problem is when woman can become aroused but does not achieve an orgasm. But the common fact is that women often find it difficult to orgasm particularly without stimulation of the clitoris. Occasionally a woman will experience pain during intercourse. This may be a physical problem, an infection, or psychological.

Causes

There are many things which can affect sexual performance and functioning. Physical illnesses, drugs, alcohol are common culprits. Other more deep-rooted causes include a poor self-image, past traumatic events, guilt, depression, fatigue, certain religious beliefs, or being in a dysfunctional relationship or even problems within the relationship.

The causes of premature ejaculation are usually psychological. And this area needs to be explored to uncover the underlying fears.

Painful intercourse for men is usually physical - an infection, or an allergic reaction to something. Problems with female arousal and orgasm may have either physical or psychological causes. Among the most common are day-to-day friction towards one's partner and inadequate stimulation. Pain during intercourse can occur for any number of reasons and should be investigated by your doctor to rule out any possible illness or disease.

Traditional Treatment

Communication is vital when there is a sexual dysfunction in the relationship. Both are involved and both need to know exactly what is happening with the other partner.

A procedure for halting premature ejaculation has been very successful with a considerable number of couples. When you are about to ejaculate, withdraw from your partner's vagina or ask her to stop stimulating you and gently squeeze the head of your penis to curb the orgasm. Keep going after about half a minute.

You may also wish to speak with a therapist about this problem to rule out any psychological reasons for ejaculating early.

When a man lacks sexual desire, the cause may be physical illness, fatigue, hormonal abnormality, or medications. There may also be psychological causes which a therapist may help identify.

A therapist can help women who do not feel any sexual desire. This involves both partners. It is vital to speak with a qualified and experienced therapist who you feel rapport with.

For painful intercourse in postmenopausal women, reduced lubrication can easily be corrected with over-the-counter creams.

For pain during intercourse in pre-menopausal women, first make sure there is adequate stimulation and lubrication. Also consult your doctor if pain persists after this.

When to seek further professional advice

You or your partner has:

- concerns about your sexual life.
- pain during intercourse.
- been exposed to sexually transmitted diseases.
- been sexually abused.
- a prolonged erection unaccompanied by sexual desire.