

Newsletter - 26 June, 20

## FOGSI's SEXUAL MEDICINE COMMITTEE IN ASSOCIATION WITH PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE

Dr. Parag Patil Memorial Public awareness e-Newsletter

~ Public Education Initiative ~



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**Dr. Yogini Rolekar**  
Sub-Editor eNewsletter  
Sexual Medicine Committee

## WHEN SEX HURTS ! - PAINFUL SEX

Sex is supposed to be pleasurable, enjoyable and ecstatic. Sex is for procreation, recreation and relation.

Healthy sexuality defines “Quality of Life”. But at times, due to various reasons “Sex can hurt”. Sex can be painful and can cause distress, anxiety, tension and misery.

Like sexual desire disorder, sexual arousal disorder and orgasmic disorder, sexual pain disorder is one of the sexual dysfunctions. Any sexual dysfunction that persists for more than six months needs treatment.

Every individual is scared of anything that is painful. When there is pain during intercourse and during penetration. It causes tremendous distress to the person, partner and the relationship.

Painful sex is more common in females compared to male. Till recently it was thought that woman was less sexual than man – but in the past few years this thinking has been demolished.

With the great societal openness towards sex and sexuality, modern views, several of gender role stereotypes, mass media, frankness of woman, sexuality education and contraception, there has been sexual emancipation among women.

When there are sexual disturbances or dysfunctions a couple can get depressed, worried, anxious, unhappy or frustrated.



It is very important to recognize diagnose and treat sexual dysfunctions of either man or woman.

Female dysfunction is a highly prevalent but an underestimated problem.

Sexual response is a complex interplay of physical, psychological and emotional factors between two people. It is influenced by familial, societal and religious beliefs.

Many women have painful intercourse at some point of time in their lives.

The medical term of painful intercourse is “dyspareunia”

“Dyspareunia” is defined as the persistent or recurrent genital pain that occurs just before, during or after intercourse.

Painful sex can be due to physical, psychological or emotional causes.

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Sex is still a taboo subject in our society. People are still not comfortable talking to the doctor or sharing with others. They suffer silently.

Whenever there is pain during intercourse the couple should meet a gynaecologist, sexologist or a surgeon.

One can have pain at different levels during intercourse.

- Pain at the level of sexual entry
- Pain in the vagina after the entry
- Deep pain during thrusting
- Throbbing pain, lasting for longer time after intercourse.

Emotional factors can be associated with many types of painful intercourse

### **Causes of Painful Intercourse**

Pain can occur at the entry or after entry and during deep thrusting.

**Entry pain** – Pain occurs during penetration if there is not enough of foreplay or proper stimulation of the body. Prior to penetration there will not be enough lubrication or genital discharge.

This can cause pain. Some men with erection or ejaculation problem may hurry for the penetration without foreplay. This will cause pain during the process.

**Drop in the hormone oestrogen** after delivery, during breastfeeding or after menopause can also cause decreased vaginal lubrication.

**Certain medications** like antidepressants, antihypertensives, sedatives, antihistamines and certain oral pills can also affect desire and arousal and can decrease lubrication, resulting in painful sex.

**Genital injury**, trauma and irritation, injury and scars can be present after accident, pelvic surgery, post childbirth injuries and sutures.

### **Infections and skin disorders**

Genital infections, vulvovaginitis, sexually transmitted diseases, dermatitis, rashes can cause pain.

**Congenital abnormality** – tight hymen, narrow introitus (opening in the vagina) absent vagina, septum in vagina can cause dyspareunia.

**Menopause** – Due to the oestrogen hormone deficiency there will be thinning of genital and urinary organs. This is responsible for painful sex after menopause.

**Cancer and its treatment** – cancer vulva, vagina and uterus will cause pain during intercourse

The radiation treatment for genital cancer can cause shortness and scarring vagina leading to pain during sex.

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## Urinary tract infections

Haemorrhoids and fissure in a no will cause pain during intercourse

## Deep dyspareunia

Deep pain occurs in the lower abdomen after deep penetration and thrusting. The pain can be more in certain positions

**Certain conditions** – endometriosis, infection in the pelvis, uterine prolapse, retroverted uterus (uterus bent backwards) pelvic floor dysfunctions, haemorrhoids, fibroids, cystitis.

**Surgeries** – scarring from pelvic surgery including hysterectomy sometimes can cause pain.

## Emotional and psychological factors –

Anxiety, depression, fear of pain, pregnancy or infection can cause less desire and arousal and lead to painful intercourse.

**Relationship factors** – disturbed, interpersonal relationship

Stress can cause tightening of pelvic floor muscles leading to pain.

Anxiety due to previous sexual abuse is also a factor.

Initial pain during intercourse can cause fear of recurring pain, inability to relax causing more pain. This can lead to avoidance of intercourse.

**Vulvodynia** – This refers to chronic pain. which affects woman's external genitalia called vulva. It may occur in one spot or different areas in the vulva. Pain can be triggered at different times leading to severe pain.

## Vaginismus

Medically “vaginismus” is defined as “recurrent or persistent involuntary spasm of the musculature of the outer third of vagina that interferes with sexual intercourse.

Vagina closes or squeezes for any attempt of insertion of vagina. Ex – an object, tampon, finger, penis or of speculum examination by gynaecologist.

Vaginismus has fear, pain and spasm of muscles that makes intercourse painful or impossible.

It is a common condition which many people do not know.

In this condition there is a deep seated fear of vaginal penetration, fear of pain during penetration. But the desire and orgasm may be normal.

Vaginismus is the commonest cause of “non consummation of marriage”.The couple may not have had successful intercourse even after 10-15 years of marriage.

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Commonest cause for vaginismus is the myth that hymen is a sign of virginity and there has to be pain and bleeding during first intercourse due to breaking of hymen. Hence many girls develop a phobia for intercourse.

The other causes of vaginismus may be lack of knowledge, negative attitude, orthodox feelings, bad advice by friends and relatives, past sexual or physical abuse.

Dyspareunia due to any reason can also cause vaginismus because of lack of arousal, dryness, discomfort and pain.

If the couple is unable to start intercourse within 3-6 months after marriage they should consult the doctor.

Pain during intercourse can be due to :

1. Physical problem;
2. Infection in genitalia or pelvis;
3. Illness; or
4. Psychological problem.

All these conditions interfere with sexual pleasure, happiness and relationship of the couple.

### **What to do when there is painful sex ?**

When there is persistent pain during intercourse either at the entry, abdomen, back or deep inside the pelvis, one has to consult the doctor.

### **Treatment**

Depending on the problem treatment is advised as below :

- Treatment of infections with antibiotics. Visit to doctor if there is white discharge, smell, itching and irritation.
- Hormone treatment Ex. Oestrogen replacement in menopausal women.
- Pain killers.
- Lubricants, moisturisers for vaginal application.
- Kegels exercises.
- Surgery : If there is tight hymen, developmental problems, pelvic inflammatory diseases, endometriosis, post operative adhesions, etc
- Removal of painful scars in genitals.
- Systematic desensitization in case of vaginismus slowly removing the phobia; learning relaxation and dilatation of vagina by fingers and dilators.
- Treatment of psychological problems.

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- Treatment and counselling of couple for relationship issues.
- Treatment of partner problems like genital infection.

### **Common questions asked about painful sex**

- Is it common to have painful sex?
- Why sex becomes painful?
- Where does sex hurt?
- Should I go to a doctor?
- I feel shy and ashamed to see the doctor. How to tell my problems?
- Will the doctor listen to me sympathetically.
- Is there any treatment ?
- What precautions a woman can take to avoid pain?
- Should I go with my husband?
- Is there a cure for painful sex?



**Dr. Padmini Prasad**  
Gynaecologist & Sexologist

### **TO ATTEND LIVE QUESTION ANSWER SESSION ON THIS SUBJECT**

Date : 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Time : 4 - 5 pm

Link :

Faculty for live session : **Dr padmini Prasad**

Moderator : **Dr Apurba kumar Dutta, Dr Yogini Roleker**

Email for sending questions : [sexmedcom@gmail.com](mailto:sexmedcom@gmail.com)

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