

Chronic Medical Illness and Sexual Function

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Having both a chronic illness and a satisfying sex life can be a challenge. When focused on healing, stability, and self-care, we sometimes forget about pleasure. If the goal is to battle an illness and live your best life, it helps to remember that a part of that life is the continued ability to enjoy sex and romance.

Both men and women may suffer from chronic medical conditions which can impact the sexual response cycle causing vaginal dryness, erection problems and changes in desire. The effects of chronic illness on sexuality are often complicated. Both the disease and the treatment for the disease may have an impact on sexual function and desire.

Vaginal dryness and pain during sex are two of the more common occurrences for women with a chronic disease. Sometimes the disease itself directly effects sexual function. Diabetes may cause damage to nerves or blood vessels causing difficulty achieving orgasm and extreme vaginal dryness. Thyroid disease may create lower than normal estrogen and testosterone levels leading to lack of libido. Most chronic illnesses will cause a change in your body that will eventually affect your sex organs.

Treatment for these conditions may be tricky but the best way to handle direct issues is to do the best you can at balancing hormone levels. By controlling the chronic disease to the best of your ability, you also help maintain conditions where treatment for sexual functioning can be successful.

A high-quality lubricant like Überlube is a good first step in dealing with dryness and pain. Made of silicone and vitamin E, Überlube does not absorb into your skin so a little bit goes a long way.

Indirect effects on female sexuality happen when medical treatments by therapy, surgery or medication cause signs, symptoms, or side effects that influence your sexual response. Cancer treatments will often force a woman into early menopause. Changes to self-esteem, mood fluctuations and reduced energy are some of the side effects that may also come with treatment of the underlying disease.

Common medical conditions that may cause vaginal dryness or pain during sex, and may impact sexual function include:

Anemia	Diabetes	Parkinson's Disease
Anxiety	Epilepsy	Rheumatoid Arthritis
Autoimmune Disorders	Hypertension	SICCA Syndrome
Cancer	Hypo or Hyper Thyroid	Sjogren's Syndrome
Depression	Multiple Sclerosis	Stroke

If you think that your sexuality has been impacted by a chronic medical condition, here are some helpful hints.

- First and most important. Maintain communication with your partner and discuss your concerns. Do not let yourself feel alone and isolated.
- Next, make an appointment with a health care professional to ensure your condition is optimally managed. You may want your partner to attend the appointment with you so that they have a better understanding of what's going on.

Some things you may want to talk about with your healthcare professional:

- A change in medication.
- Hormone support.
- Best practices for general health, specifically diet, exercise and sleep.
- Stress reduction.

Try some simple solutions to rekindle your libido at home too:

- Some new bedroom toys. Consult a specialist to find the right vibrator or accessory for you.
- A luxurious silicone lube like Überlube to prolong sexual arousal and decrease vaginal dryness.
- Reveal your fantasies and try something new.

Above all, do not remain silent. Sexuality specialists can often address your concerns. Chronic illness is hard enough. Don't give up the intimacy and pleasure that you desire.

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