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STEAM

VA Strategies to Educate and Address Menopause

Newsletter



MyHealthVet to Enable And Negotiate
for Shared Decision Making

Miami VA
Healthcare System
★★★★★

June 2015

Menopause and Sex

Sexual Issues and Menopause

Around the time of menopause, you might experience changes in your sex life.

Many women say they lose the desire for sex or it becomes painful, while others say that it becomes more enjoyable.

The causes of sexual changes during this time can be due to:

- Decreased hormones which can make vaginal tissues drier and thinner. This can make sex painful.
- Decreased hormones can lower sex drive.
- Night sweats can disturb your sleep making you too tired for sex.
- Emotional changes can make you feel too stressed for sex.

Remember, everyone is different and being less interested in sex as you age is not a medical condition that needs treatment. But if these changes upset you, you can get help from your PACT team. Don't be shy about talking with them or your partner. This is a topic that comes up often and they are comfortable discussing it

Did you know?

Even if you have only had your period a few times a year, you can still get pregnant. Remember, if you have stopped getting your period completely, you still can get sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Always make sure to practice safe sex.

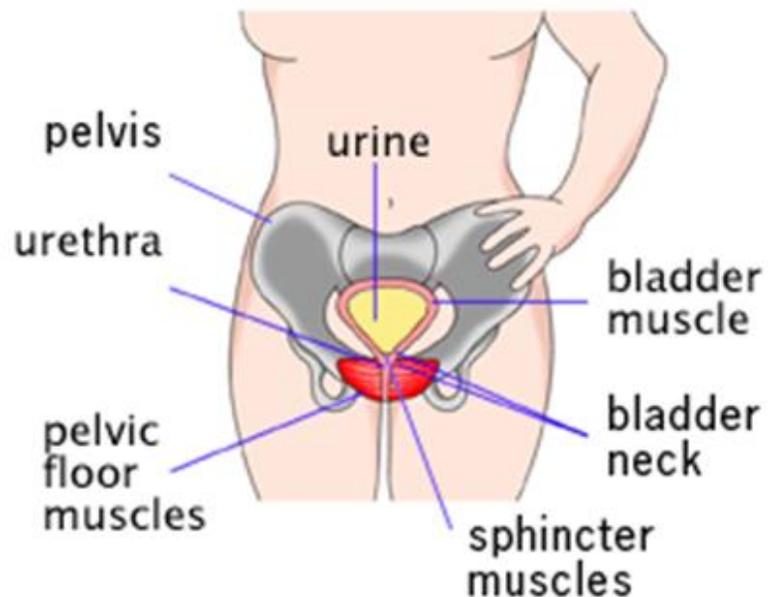
Tips on talking with your partner

Talking with your partner about your sexual changes can be both scary and helpful. Some things to discuss include:

- What does and does not feel good
- Times that you feel more relaxed
- Which positions are more comfortable
- You now may need more time to get aroused than before
- Concerns you have about how you look and how your body is changing
- Other ways to enjoy being physically connected than intercourse, like massage

Speaking about it now, before an issue arises, can strengthen your sexual relationship and your overall connection. If you need help, consider meeting with a therapist for individual or couples therapy.

TIP: *Do Your Kegel Exercises* When done daily, Kegel exercises help with bladder control but they also keep your vagina toned. Kegel exercises include: squeezing and releasing the muscles you use to control your urine.



All information for this news letter can be found at:

Womenhealth.gov and Everydayhealth.com

Graphics from fda.gov

For more information on menopause and aging please visit us at:

steam.varesearchfoundation.com

OR

www.miami.va.gov/menopause

Tips on Improving the Mood

Change Your Look: Make time to raise your self-esteem by getting your nails done or trying anything new that will make you feel gorgeous. Remember, you're only as sexy as you feel.

Ask for What You Want: Your body is changing in new and different ways, and your sexual responses can be changing too. Now is the time to tell your partner what you want. Let your partner know what does and does not feel good even if it's completely different from what it used to be. They want to please you, so help them do it!

Try New Positions: Due to changes in estrogen, positions that were enjoyable and comfortable may no longer be. Try new positions and see what feels good for both of you. You may be surprised!

Have More Foreplay: Reaching orgasm during and after menopause might take longer. Because of this, foreplay can be key during this time. Take the time to really enjoy each other's bodies.

Have Sex Often: Sexual responses can decline in menopause. This means it may take you longer to reach orgasm or it may not be as intense as it once was. You can keep your orgasms at their usual levels by staying more sexually active.

Lubrication: Vaginal dryness is a common in menopause. It can lead to uncomfortable and painful intercourse. Water and silicone-based lubricants and estrogen creams can help. Talk to your PACT team to see which is right for you.

Social Group: Make sure to have a group of friends who are in the midst of or have past menopause with whom you feel comfortable talking openly about sexual issues. You can give one another valuable advice and bedroom tips.

VA Links

www.myhealth.va.gov

This is the link to the My HealtheVet page. There you can learn all the ways it can help you stay connected to your healthcare team, how to enroll, reorder medications, etc.

Once enrolled in the My HealtheVet you can participate in our MEANS program.

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Dr. Joslyn Wiley



Dr. Joslyn Wiley graduated from Duke University School of Medicine in 2007. After completing her education at Duke University, she came to Miami to complete a 3-year residency in Internal Medicine at Jackson Memorial Hospital. During this time, she became thoroughly acquainted with the Miami VA by caring for the needs of Veterans during her weekly outpatient clinical duties there. Due to her strong commitment to primary care and interest in process improvement, she was selected for a one-year position as a Chief Resident of Quality and Safety at the Miami VA Medical Center. In this position, she continued to see patients regularly and also devoted a significant amount of time to educating trainees in quality improvement and patient safety as well as designing projects to improve processes of care.

Dr. Wiley has now joined the Miami VA as a new provider in the Women's Health clinic. During her year as a Chief Resident, in caring for women Veterans, she further developed her interest in ensuring high-quality care for a population with unique needs. The time that Dr. Wiley has spent working with women Veterans has given her a strong desire to develop a comprehensive clinical setting in which women Veterans feel comfortable and can be assured that they are receiving the highest standard of care from dedicated professionals. Dr. Wiley looks forward to fostering this type of environment in the Women's Health clinic.