

## **Female sexual response**

Men and women can experience sexual difficulties at any age. Women can experience difficulties with libido, arousal, orgasm and pain with sex. Causes can be medical, physical, psychological or social.

### **Libido**

Lack of libido refers to low or no interest in sex and can be caused by a combination of biological, personal and relationship factors. Staff at the Sexual Health Service can assist by assessing factors contributing to low libido and working with you to resolve or manage them.

Treatments can include medications to address biological causes, individual and/or couple counselling for personal and relationship factors.

### **Arousal**

Female sexual arousal difficulties are an inability to achieve and progress through the stages of arousal. These difficulties can be a result of a medical condition, medications or inadequate stimulation, especially in older women.

Treatment includes medical management of the causative condition, and counselling and education to assist in arousal. Good communication and foreplay are essential to good sex.

Older women may find a topical oestrogen cream useful.

### **Female Orgasm**

Anorgasmia is the inability to orgasm. It can result from psychological, physical, medication and drug causes. It can also be due to a lack of stimulation.

Treatment is most commonly counselling in ways to maximise sexual stimulation and minimise sexual inhibition. Counselling might be with a couple and include educative discussion of technique or with the individual to explore sensation and sensuality.

### **Pain with Sex**

Dyspareunia refers to pain in the genital area during or after intercourse. Most of the time there is a physical cause for this such as lack of arousal, medications that affect a woman's ability to lubricate, decreases in hormones that can lead to dryness, vestibulitis, vaginismus, infection, orthopaedic problems or endometriosis. Psychological factors linked to dyspareunia include sexual trauma and feelings of guilt or fear associated with sex.

Treatment will depend upon a specific diagnosis. Counselling is often recommended either individually or as a couple. Kegel exercises which improve vaginal awareness and control and physiotherapy help some women.

### **Normal Variance**

Sexual function concerns are commonly the result of, or complicated by, social construction and expectations.

Social expectations produce pressures about how sex should be. These expectations impact on how long sex should take, what foreplay is good, who initiates sex, how often sex should occur and the list goes on.

They often fail to give consideration to injury, illness, drug use, hormones, families, life stage and personal preference.

For example, with increasing age both sexes experience reduced tactile sensitivity, are slower to become aroused, have greater difficulty reaching orgasms which are often less intense and longer recovery times.

Learning to communicate well and negotiate with your sexual partner will increase the likelihood of good sex.

Sexual Health Service Tasmania can provide a full assessment of the medical and psychosocial factors associated with female sexual difficulties.

### **Hours of Service**

*The Sexual Health Service toll free number is staffed Monday to Friday from 8.30 am until 5.00 pm. Clinic opening hours vary from site to site. Please contact your local office for times (see contact details on the back of this pamphlet).*

**Sexual Health Service  
Clinical Services**

**HOBART**

60 Collins Street  
Hobart 7000  
Ph: (03) 6233 3557

**LAUNCESTON**

42 Canning Street  
Launceston 7250  
Ph: (03) 6336 2216

**DEVONPORT**

23 Steele Street  
Devonport 7310  
Ph: (03) 6421 7759

**BURNIE**

11 Jones Street  
Burnie 7320  
Ph: (03) 6434 6315

**Toll Free Number  
1800 675 859**

**SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE  
A joint Australian and State  
Government Program**

*The Royal Hobart Hospital is Tasmania's largest hospital and provides a number of state-wide services that include cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, burns, hyperbaric and diving medicine, neonatal intensive care and high-risk obstetrics.*

*It is the major teaching and research hospital for the state and works closely with the University of Tasmania.*

*Many students in the health care professions are taught within the Hospital, and gaining skills in examining and interviewing patients is an important part of their education and training.*

*We ask for your co-operation and encourage you to participate in our teaching and research activities. Your permission is required for participation.*

The Royal Hobart Hospital encourages feedback from patients, relatives and visitors. This feedback helps staff to better understand the needs of patients and provide the best possible patient care.



**The Royal Hobart Hospital  
is a smoke-free site**

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**Information  
Pamphlet**



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