



Patient Education Sheet

Sex and Sjögren's

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Sjögren's can affect women's sexuality, but even with the presence of Sjögren's, women and their partners can enjoy sexual activity and maintain a state of sexual well-being.

Vaginal dryness. Women with Sjögren's often experience vaginal dryness.

What you can do about it:

- Some over-the-counter vaginal moisturizers may help relieve vaginal dryness. For example, Replens® contains a compound called polycarbophil, Luvena® contains prebiotics and Feminease® contains Yerba Santa.
- Lubricants, such as K-Y jelly®, SYLK® or Astroglide®, may help increase lubrication for intercourse.
- Vaginal estrogen (hormones) may be right for some women. This can come in cream, ring or pill form.
- Try different techniques to make sex more comfortable, such as more foreplay or masturbation.

Pelvic pain/pain with intercourse. Pelvic pain can have many causes, including Sjögren's, pudendal neuropathy, and interstitial cystitis.

What you can do about it:

- See your health care provider (Gyn/Urologist) for an evaluation of why you have pelvic pain. There may not be an "easy" answer, but in many cases a possible cause can be identified and treated.
- Treating vaginal dryness may improve some pelvic pain.
- Some women will benefit from pelvic physical therapy. Your health care provider may be able to refer you to a physical therapist with pelvic floor expertise.

Fatigue and mood symptoms. Fatigue, chronic pain and depression can contribute to the daily challenge of living with a chronic illness and affect sexual desire and function.

What you can do about it:

- Tell your health care provider if you are feeling depressed. Treating depression may help to improve problems with sexual function.
- Recognize that some antidepressant medications may contribute to sexual symptoms and dryness. Discuss this with your provider.
- Take care of your Sjögren's and make time for yourself and things you enjoy.
- Remember that fatigue and chronic pain can affect a woman's sex life. Be open with your partner about your experience and needs and work together for satisfying intimacy.

For more information on Sjögren's, contact the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation at:
6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 325, Bethesda, MD 20817 • 800-475-6473 • www.sjogrens.org • ssf@sjogrens.org.

Clinicians: Please make multiple copies of this Patient Education Sheet and distribute to your patients.