

*The Foundation thanks Anne E. Burke, MD, MPH for authoring this Patient Education Sheet.*

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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 daily challenges 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, visit the Foundation website at [www.sjogrens.org](http://www.sjogrens.org), call 301-530-4420, email [info@sjogrens.org](mailto:info@sjogrens.org), or write to the Sjögren's Foundation, 10701 Parkridge Blvd, Ste 170, Reston, VA 20191