

Sexual Dysfunction and Trauma Treatments

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What is Sexual Dysfunction?

Sexual dysfunction is a type of disorder that prevents a person from experiencing satisfaction during sexual encounters and can take place at any point in the sexual response cycle. The sexual response cycle includes excitement, arousal, orgasm, and resolution. The sexual desire is also part of excitement and can also be affected by sexual dysfunction. 43% of women and 31% of men report experiencing some kind of sexual dysfunction with most of these people being over the age of 40 as dysfunction is associated with aging. While this is a common issue, there is a stigma around it so many people do not like talking about it.

Types of Sexual Dysfunction:

Desire Disorders:	The lack of desire to participate in sexual activity
Arousal Disorders:	The inability to be excited or aroused during sexual activity
Orgasm disorders:	The delay or lack of orgasm during sexual activity
Pain disorders:	Pain during intercourse or sexual activity

Symptoms

In Men	Inability to have an erection, commonly called erectile dysfunction The lack or delay of ejaculation with enough stimulation (retarded ejaculation) Inability to control when ejaculation takes place (premature ejaculation)
In Women	Inability to orgasm Not enough lubrication made by the body before or during sexual activity Inability to relax the vaginal muscles enough for intercourse to take place
Everyone	Lack of interest or desire in either gender The inability to be aroused Pain during intercourse

Causes

Physical	There are many physical conditions that are associated with sexual dysfunction. Included on this list are: Diabetes, heart disease, neurological disorders, hormonal imbalances, kidney and liver failure, alcohol use disorders, and substance abuse disorders.
Psychological	This is more the mental side of sexual dysfunction which can include stress, anxiety, concern over sex and sexual performance, relationship stress, guilt, body image concerns, or past sexual trauma.
Medications	Antidepressants, Hyper-intensive medication to treat high blood pressure, and a few different hormone medications.

Treatment

Medication	<p>Medication can often be the cause of sexual dysfunction so first a change in medication can be helpful. If the root cause of the sexual dysfunction is a hormone imbalance then hormone shots or pills can be prescribed. For men who are struggling with sexual function medication like sildenafil (Viagra), tadalafil (Cialis), vardenafil (Levitra, Staxyn) and avanafil (Stendra) can be prescribed to aid in blood flow to the penis. For women the hormonal options are estrogen or testosterone, however they are not approved for this specific purpose and would have to be prescribed for another issue. In premenopausal women, flibanserin (Addyi) and bremelanotide (Vyleesi) have been approved by the FDA to treat low sexual desire. There are less medications on the market for women than there are for men, partially due to the problems that can be addressed by medication between men and women.</p>
Mechanical aids	<p>For men the two options that combat erectile dysfunction are vacuum devices and penile implants.</p> <p>Vacuum devices: This is an external pump that can be used to maintain an erection. The pump part of the device allows the penis to become erect and the band part helps maintain the erection. This can be considered if there is poor blood flow to the penis or if there is nerve damage. Side effects are no ejaculation, numbness, bruising and swelling, and having a hard time orgasm.</p> <p>Penile implant: A penile implant is implanted during a surgical procedure and there are two types: Inflatable and non-inflatable implants. The inflatable surgically put a put underneath the scrotum that allows you to get an erection whenever needed. The non-inflatable option implants bendable silicon rods into the erection chambers of the penis that allow the patient to put the penis in an erect position. Both of these options are good options for men who experience ED and are okay with the more invasive solution. It is usually performed when the doctors are confident that there is not a chance the ED resolves itself. They typically last up to 20 years. Over 90% of patients who receive penile implants are satisfied with the results.</p>
Sex therapy	<p>Sex therapists can be helpful when the issue is more cognitive or emotional and the issue cannot be addressed by a normal physician. This can also act as martial counseling if the couple is having difficulties with their sexual relationship together. Sex therapy is mainly talk therapy to go through emotions, thoughts, and feelings out loud with a safe person. Even if you do not have sexual dysfunctions and are just uncomfortable with sex</p>

or talking about sex, sex therapists are available too.

Behavioral	Behavioral treatment goes through the behavior of the relationship to assess what specific behaviors in the relationship are harmful and could be the root of the sexual dysfunction. This is often done by someone self-assessing their lives, behavior, and relationship.
Psychotherapy	Psychotherapy is like sex therapists because it is the same foundation of talk therapy but they cover wider topics. In psychotherapy you can cover anxiety, depression, guilt, poor body image, and past sexual traumas. All of these things could be contributing factors to sexual dysfunction and breaking feelings down can allow for a clearer more calm mind. Like any kind of therapy it is conducted with a licensed professional who is an unbiased outsider in your life that must keep your confidence. Because of this it is a great option for people dealing with issues they may feel uncomfortable bringing up to the people in their lives.
Communication	Oftentimes open communication between partners can also greatly improve the situation. Letting your partner in on your stress and anxieties, not just about sex but about life in general. It makes the couple a team that then also works better in the bedroom. Being open about struggles with sex can also alleviate some of the stress of having to perform for your partner and can create a better experience on both sides.

Is it curable?

The interesting thing about sexual dysfunction is depending on the underlying cause and the treatment it may or may not be curable. The physical types of dysfunction can be corrected. But the emotional and cognitive ones can be reduced, but much like anxiety and depression, can always come back later if they are not kept an eye on.

Sexual Trauma

Initially the treatment for sexual trauma is physical. Making sure the person feels safe and then tending to the injuries they may have endured during the experience. This can include fixing broken bones and cleaning up blood. Secondly, if the patient is okay with it a forensic exam should be conducted. This may consist of something like a rape kit which would provide evidence of assault if they wanted to pursue legal charges later on. Then a series of tests should be run to check for sexually transmitted infections to see if you can treat them. Finally, if there is a risk of pregnancy acting to prevent that to avoid further emotional burden.

For physiological sexual trauma there are multiple routes you can go depending on age and what relationship you had with the trauma.

For children this can look like art therapy, play therapy, music therapy, cognitive processing therapy, animal assisted therapy and many others. These types of therapy allow for children to start processing what happened to them through different modes when they are unable to comprehend what happened or unable to articulate the words.

For adolescents, young adults, and adults there is individual therapy and group therapy. Individual therapy allows the patient to work through feelings and emotions one on one with someone who has experience processing those difficult emotions. Having an unbiased outsider who you do not see in your normal life can help the person feel safe sharing and opening up about the experience. Knowing that you are protected by confidentiality can also help people seek help. Group therapy is also available. This works as a small group of people who have all had similar experiences. This allows people to share but also hear others experiences so that they can recognize that they are not alone.

The hard part about seeking therapy is you often have to admit that this experience happened and with that can be associated shame and guilt. This is why being there in our friendships and parent/child relationships is so important because knowing you have someone advocating for you is important.