

# Sex Therapy

## What is sex therapy?

Sex therapy is specialized treatment for sexual problems. Sex can be a source of great pleasure for most couples. Couples often believe that good sex always happens. However, sexual problems are very common. When a sexual problem occurs, it can cause stress.

Before you see a sex therapist, see your healthcare provider to check for medical problems that may be causing the sexual problem. Diabetes, high blood pressure, certain medicines, and some kinds of surgery affect sexual satisfaction. Alcoholism, drug abuse, or heavy smoking can also affect sexual performance.

## When is it used?

There are many things that can cause problems in your sexual relationship:

- You may worry about your looks, your performance, and how often you have sex.
- You may have a different level of sexual desire from your partner, and that may change based on what is going on in each person's life. Stress at work, school, or home can affect sexual desire.
- You may disagree about what sexual practices are OK or enjoyable.
- You may not know how to please each other sexually.

Other problems that may lower sexual satisfaction include:

- Trouble getting and keeping an erection
- Premature ejaculation
- Lack of sexual desire
- Lack of satisfaction from sexual activity
- Trouble reaching orgasm

## How does it work?

Sex therapy is a short-term form of counseling, generally 6 to 20 sessions with a therapist. You may go to therapy one hour every week or every other week.

As part of therapy, you may have homework, such as:

- Reading books or watching videos about sexuality. Education about sex and sexual behaviors or responses can be helpful.
- Touching exercises that help reduce the pressure to perform during sex.
- Improving your communication with your partner about what each of you find satisfying and pleasurable. Talking openly and supporting each other is a very important part of treating emotional causes of sexual problems. You and your partner may want to discuss and try something new if you feel it might improve your relationship.

## How do I find a therapist?

Most states do not have laws that regulate sex therapists. Anyone can claim to be a sex therapist. It is important to seek treatment from a licensed professional. A sex therapist should be a mental healthcare provider such as a psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse, social worker, marriage or family therapist, or psychologist who has special training in sexual problems.

Ask questions and get referrals from people you know and trust. You could check with:

- Your healthcare provider
- Your health insurance company
- Your employee assistance program (EAP) at work
- Local mental health or human service agencies
- Professional associations of psychologists, psychiatrists, or counselors

Most sexual problems can be treated. The first step is to admit that there is a problem, and then get the needed help.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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