

## SEXUAL THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOUR

# Is sex supposed to be painful?

KEY WORDS 

pain | sexual intercourse | health



Sex is meant to be a positive and enjoyable experience. Unfortunately, for some, it does not always feel that way. **If you have ever experienced pain during sex, recognise that you are not alone** – many people encounter this pain in their lifetime. The good news is that most of the discomfort can be overcome or at least reduced with the right approach.

The scientific medical term for pain during sex is dyspareunia. It refers to the pain you can feel before, during, or after sex, and it can happen in different areas down there. We've prepared an infographic going into more detail on pain that you can experience during sex here.

There are **various reasons for this**, which can be **physiological** or **psychological**.



For young men, pain during sex can be caused by an infection, an allergic reaction to spermicide or latex, some physical conditions (such as having too tight foreskin) or by irritation from previous sexual or non-sexual activities.

For young women, pain during sex can be caused by different reasons, from infections and dryness to more complicated states like cysts or endometriosis.

Pain or discomfort may even not be physiological. It can also be a consequence of not being relaxed enough, fear or shame related to sex or worrying about your self-image or body issues. Do not feel ashamed or take the blame for this. It happens to all of us sometimes! It is important to communicate this with your partner. Meaning, that if you consent to sexual activity, you need to take it slower and perhaps gentler, being on your own or with a partner.

If you feel pain during sex, it is crucial to talk about it. Many people avoid discussing it because of embarrassment, but your well-being is important, and there are different ways to address it.



Here are some **tips to relieve the pain:**

- Consider using a **lubricant** if dryness might be the issue. These can be bought in pharmacies but also in grocery stores.
- Reflect on any new products you might be using (new laundry detergent, shower gel, skin products, even lubricants etc.) that could be causing irritation.

But if the pain persists it is time to **consult a healthcare professional**. A doctor can help identify whether an underlying condition requires medical attention or provide ideas on what to do to solve the unpleasant issue.

If something does not feel right, **seeking help is a brave and essential step**. You are not alone in this, and there are solutions to make sure your experience of sex is positive and pain-free.



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