Endometriosis
Endometriosis can cause a number of sexual problems for women.

Endometriosis occurs when tissue that lines the uterus (the endometrium) grows outside the uterus. For example, this tissue can grow on the ovaries or the fallopian tubes. The tissue itself is not harmful. But it can still respond to hormonal changes, just like it would inside the uterus. This can lead to chronic pelvic pain and problems during menstrual periods.

Sexual pain is common in women with endometriosis. Thrusting during intercourse can irritate the growths. The pain may linger for a few hours to a few days. A woman may start to expect pain, making her tense and anxious.

As a result, many women become frustrated and depressed. Some lose their desire for sex or their ability to have orgasms. Many couples do not know how to talk about the issue and relationships can suffer.

Fortunately, there are treatments available. Options include pain medication, hormonal therapy, and surgery. The choice of treatment usually depends on how severe the endometriosis is.

Couples can also make some adjustments. Timing sex around a woman’s menstrual cycle, when symptoms are often worse, might help. Since hormones can aggravate the endometrial tissue, couples might avoid sex before and during a woman’s period.

Trying different sexual routines can help, too. Positions that don’t involve deep penetration might be more comfortable. Some couples decide to be intimate in other ways – kissing, caressing, and cuddling, for example.

If you think you or your partner might have endometriosis, be sure to discuss your concerns with a doctor.

Resources

International Society for Sexual Medicine

“What can women with endometriosis do to improve their sexual relationships?”
“What kinds of sexual problems are caused by endometriosis?”


The Journal of Sexual Medicine

Evangelista, Alessandra, MD, MSc, et al.

“Sexual Function in Patients with Deep Infiltrating Endometriosis”

(Full-text. First published online: October 24, 2013)


Womenshealth.gov

“Endometriosis Fact Sheet”

(Last updated: July 16, 2012)