

Reclaiming Sexual Health

The **Women's Institute of Sexual Health** helps women have better sex lives at every stage of life.

The general public is widely acquainted with men's sexual health. Whether it's ED or premature ejaculation, men have a multitude of products on the market to help them have better sex lives. Women have fewer options.

Although women have higher rates of sexual complaints than men, discussing the topic has been taboo—until now.

"Sexual health is finally on the radar for women," says Brooke Faught, DNP, founder and director of the Women's Institute for Sexual Health (WISH) in Nashville, a division of Urology Associates P.C. "Women are becoming more verbal about concerns like sexual arousal and painful sex. Now that there are a few products on the market for women's sexual health, people are also becoming more aware of solutions."

Stages of Sexual Health

"Sex is a fundamental human right," Faught says. "Every woman should have the opportunity to explore positive and healthy sexuality."

Despite the reluctance of women to speak up, sexual concerns are present at every stage of a woman's life. Faught explains that younger girls from teen years to mid-20s might experience vulvar or vaginal pain and concerns about libido and orgasm. Many of the complaints at this age may be due to inexperience and a lack of knowledge about sex.

Women in the childbearing stage (typically ages 22-40) experience tremendous changes in their body that affect their sexual pleasure and response. Sex may be more painful after childbirth, and their desire for sex may change. Breastfeeding complicates the equation even further, and the stresses of caring for children can also interfere with their sex life.

"Sex is often not as big a part of life for women who are 45 to 64," Faught says, as decreasing levels of testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone cause



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a decline in desire, arousal, and lubrication, leading to sexual pain and a diminishment of orgasm. At the same time, empty nesters finally have the opportunity to rekindle their sex life.

For the 65-plus age group, chronic pain and bladder and bowel problems often interfere with sex, along with more serious health problems such as skin disorders or a precancerous vulvar condition known as lichen sclerosis. Sexual pain not addressed in younger years may become more severe.

Women at every stage of life visit WISH to receive proper diagnoses and specialized treatment for issues of sexual health. Whether the solution requires hormone replacement therapy, medication, stress management techniques, or sex therapy, WISH is equipped to address the full spectrum of medical issues that affect a woman's sexuality.

At the end of the day, the beneficiary is not just the patient. "We've received lots of flowers and thank-you cards from happy partners," Faught adds.



Downtown Office
2801 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37209

Franklin Office
4601 Carothers Parkway
Suite 475
Franklin, TN 37067

615-250-9265
wishnashville.com