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## Sexual Pain and Sex Therapy

### 1. What is **sexual pain**?

- Persistent or recurrent 1) pain with penetration 2) fear or anxiety about pelvic pain in anticipation of penetration 3) tension or tightening of the pelvic floor muscles during penetration.
- Although medical issues, such as inflammation, can play a role in sexual pain and should be addressed, there are often so many other non-physical contributors that are equally as important!

### 2. What providers should I see?

- Pelvic pain is complex and requires intradisciplinary assessment and treatment.
- Often it should involve assessment of the following:
  - o Your **gut health** by a gastroenterologist and nutritionist
  - o Your **brain health** by a behavioral specialist
  - o Your gynecologic and urologic health
  - o Your **pelvic floor muscles** by a trained physician and physical therapist
- **BUT** all these assessments focus on physical assessment, and sex is more than a physical experience, so ask your provider about the role of sex therapy too!

## What is Sex Therapy?

- Sex therapy requires creating safe space to discuss conflicting and confusing messages about sex, sexual expectations, and sexual scripts.
- The goal is to create a vision of what sex and intimacy means for you.
- Ask your doctor how to find a trained and licensed sex therapist who can guide you through reflection on your sexual experiences in the four domains of spirit, mind, heart, body.



