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QA SEX

Dr. Cindy Pan MBBS, FRACGP serves up another month of sex-pert advice.



Q My partner, who has been distant for months, refuses to discuss it. I suspect he is having an affair but when I ask him, we end up fighting. What can I do?

It is difficult to salvage a relationship if only one person is willing to participate or even acknowledge that there is a problem. At a certain point, it becomes an issue of what you are willing to accept and how long you are willing to tolerate a relationship devoid of love, affection, romance or even friendship. Do try to understand what may be the cause of the difficulty but do not blame yourself if you find you cannot. In the end, it starts to matter less and less whether or not he is having an affair, or if he is in love with someone else if the upshot of it all is that, either way, he doesn't love you.

Q My periods have been infrequent ever since I started menstruating. Should I be concerned? Will I be able to have a baby later on?

It is not uncommon for women to have irregular or infrequent periods. There are a number of possible causes for this. A hormonal condition called PCOS – polycystic ovary syndrome – may result in irregular or absent periods as well as other symptoms such as acne and hirsutism (excess facial and body hair). There may be associated insulin resistance and obesity as well as increased risk of diabetes and high cholesterol. Stress, weight loss, being underweight, eating disorders, major life events or changes such as overseas travel or changes in school or your job may also cause temporary loss or irregularity of periods. Talk to your doctor who may recommend appropriate tests to determine the possible cause.



Q Can testosterone supplements increase your libido?

While small amounts of testosterone may increase libido in some women especially post-menopausal, the dangers of using it are immense and include potential side effects such as permanent deepening of voice, hair loss and male pattern balding, shrinking of breasts, increased facial and body hair, acne, and irregularity or loss of periods. Some female athletes use this illicitly to build muscle to enhance their performance and reduce recovery time between training sessions. However, this practice is dangerous and additional risks from self-injecting include infection with blood-borne viruses such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C from sharing needles or other injecting equipment.

Q I am starting a new relationship and want to get checked out for STDs. What tests do I need to do?

Recommended tests might include a blood test for HIV, Hepatitis B and syphilis as well as urine samples to test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea. If you have not had a recent Pap smear done or if you have had an abnormal Pap smear requiring repeat testing or follow up, your doctor may recommend doing this at the same time. It is important to note that routine screening tests for STDs do not include herpes or wart virus. These viruses can be present in the skin "silently" and will not be picked up via standard tests if there is no visible sign of skin changes, characteristic skin lesions or symptoms.

Q I've never had sex. Do I need a Pap smear?

Women who have never been sexually active do not really need to have Pap smears done. However, once you become sexually active, it is recommended that you start having Pap smears from around 12 months after losing your virginity. Even if you do not continue to be sexually active, you should still start having regular Pap smears done from around a year after your first sexual experience. Generally, if there is no abnormality on your Pap smear results, doctors will advise that you do a Pap smear once every two years. But if there are abnormalities, your doctor will then advise on what follow-up checks are required, depending on the degree of the abnormality.

CAN'T FIGURE OUT YOUR SEX QUERY?

Send your question to:

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