

SHAPE

8 Reasons You Might Be Feeling Pain After Sex

If you've ever wondered why you're having pain after sex and what you can do about it, these common reasons might sound familiar.

Gabrielle Kassel | June 5, 2019



2. You have BV, a yeast infection, or a UTI.

"These three issues can cause sexually active individuals a great deal of pain around sex and often unwarranted worry," says [Rob Huizenga, M.D.](#), an LA-based celebrity physician, sexual health expert, and author of *Sex, Lies & STDs*. While they're all super common, the pain that each causes during and after sex is a little bit different.

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV): When BV (an overgrowth of bacteria in the vagina) is symptomatic, it usually comes with a strong, fishy odor and thin, discolored discharge. Again, you may not ever



want to have sex when your vagina smells off, but if you do... ouch! "It's going to cause inflammation to the vaginal mucosa, which is going to get further irritated from sex," explains Dr. Carey. "Any irritation in the pelvis can also cause the pelvic floor muscles to spasm in response." These spasms can create a throbbing or pulsating sensation that's uncomfortable and leaves you with pelvic pain after sex. Fortunately, BV can be cleared up with a prescription from your doctor.

Yeast Infection: Caused by the candida fungus, yeast infections often present with "cottage cheese" discharge, itching around the pubic area, and generalized soreness in and around your nether-bits. Basically, sex and yeast infections are about as compatible as Ariana Grande and Pete Davidson. So, if you find yourself doing the dirty when you have one, it's probably going to be uncomfortable. "Because yeast infections cause the localized tissue in the vagina to become inflamed," explains Dr. Carey. Combine the friction of penetration with the preexisting inflammation, and it'll certainly exacerbate any pain or irritation. In fact, Dr. Barnes says the inflammation can be on the inside or the outside, so if your labia look redder after the fact, that's why. Thank u, next. (Pro tip: follow this [Step-By-Step Guide to Curing a Vaginal Yeast Infection](#) before heading South.)

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI): A UTI happens when bacteria gets lodged in your urinary tract (the urethra, bladder, and kidneys). Granted, you're probably not going to be in the mood if you have a UTI, but if the opportunity comes knocking and you chose to partake, it's going to feel less than amazing. "The bladder lining gets irritated when you have a UTI, and because the bladder lies on the front wall of the vagina, penetrative intercourse can agitate an already irritated area," explains Dr. Carey. "As a result, the pelvic floor muscles, (which surround the vagina and bladder), can spasm, resulting in secondary pelvic pain after sex." Luckily, an antibiotic can clear the infection right up. (Related: [Can You Have Sex with a UTI?](#))

3. You have an STI or PID.

Before you freak out, know that "STI's are not known for causing pain during or after sex," according to Heather Bartos, M.D., an ob-gyn in Cross Roads, Texas. Still, some STI's may lead to pain after sex, especially if they go undetected and untreated for a long time.

Herpes is the STI most classically associated with pain, says Dr. Bartos. "It can present with painful genital or rectal ulcers, sores, or skin breaks that can be extremely painful and uncomfortable not only during and after sex, but also in regular life." All experts offer the same advice: If you're in the middle of a herpes outbreak, don't have sex. Not only do you risk transmitting the infection to your partner, but sex can cause those external sores to open or enlarge and become even more tender until they heal. (Related: [Here's How to Get Rid of a Cold Sore In 24 Hours](#)). Plus, since the herpes virus lives in the nerves, it also results in chronic nerve pain, says Courtney Barnes, M.D., an ob-gyn with University of Missouri Health Care in Columbia, Missouri.



Other STI's like gonorrhea, chlamydia, mycoplasma, and trichomoniasis can also lead to pain during and after sex if they've developed into pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), says Dr. Huizenga. "It's an infection of the reproductive tract and gut—specifically the uterine, tubal, ovarian, and intra-abdominal lining—that causes them to be inflamed." A hallmark sign of PID is what doctors call the "chandelier" sign, which is when barely touching the skin above the cervix causes pain.

Sex or not, "people can actually become quite ill from this disease as it progresses; it can cause significant abdominal pain, fever, discharge, nausea/vomiting, etc. until it's treated," says Dr. Barnes. The solution? (Bless, there is one!) Antibiotics. (Note: Any vaginal bacteria can ascend and cause PID, not just sexually transmitted infections, so don't jump to conclusions—unless, of course, you're experiencing other symptoms of STIs.)

And friendly PSA: Most STI's are asymptomatic (like these Sleeper STDs You're at Risk For), so even if you're not experiencing the symptoms mentioned above, don't forget to get tested every six months, or between partners, whichever comes first.

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