



Painful Sex: Where Do I Begin?™

Use where, when and how discomfort occurs to choose a respectful next step.



Pain with sexual touch or penetration deserves attention. It may involve dryness, tissue changes, pelvic-floor tension, infection, a skin condition, medication, prior treatment or another concern.

Where Do You Feel It?



AT THE VULVA OR OPENING

Possible clues:

- Burning, stinging or rawness
- Dry or irritated external tissues
- Pain with initial touch or entry

Useful next step:

Pause painful activity and arrange evaluation if symptoms persist, recur or include skin changes.



INSIDE THE VAGINA

Possible clues:

- Dryness, friction or tightness
- Pain during penetration or an exam
- Difficulty relaxing or feeling that the muscles close

Useful next step:

Consider lubrication, vaginal-moisture support and assessment for GSM or pelvic-floor tension.



DEEPER IN THE PELVIS

Possible clues:

- Deep aching, pressure or sharp pain
- Pain with certain positions or deeper penetration
- Pain that continues afterward

Useful next step:

Medical evaluation is important because deeper pain can have several possible causes.

What Was Happening Around It?



Dryness or Irritation

Did tissues feel dry, itchy, burning or tender before sexual activity?



Pelvic Floor Tension

Was it hard to relax, or did pain worsen with repeated squeezing?



Health or Treatment Changes

Any infection, surgery, cancer treatment, medication or new product?



Comfort & Context

Was there enough time, arousal, lubrication, privacy and freedom to stop?

Choose Your Next Step

1



STOP IF IT HURTS

Pain is a reason to pause, change the activity or stop. Pushing through can increase guarding and irritation.

2



SUPPORT COMFORT

Use generous lubricant for sexual touch, allow more time for arousal and choose positions where you control depth and pace.

3



NOTICE THE PATTERN

Record the location, sensation, timing, triggers, bleeding, urinary symptoms and what helps.

4



ASK FOR INDIVIDUALIZED CARE

Depending on the pattern, support may include a gynecologic evaluation, GSM treatment, pelvic-floor physical therapy or sexual-health care.



Comfort and consent remain important throughout. Intimacy does not have to include penetration.



Gentle Reminder

Painful sex is a symptom, not something you should be expected to tolerate. A clear description can help guide appropriate evaluation.



Martine's Midlife Wellness Tip

Begin with the location and sensation: outside, inside or deeper; burning, tight, aching or sharp. Specific words make the conversation easier.



Seek prompt medical care for postmenopausal bleeding, heavy bleeding, severe or rapidly worsening pelvic pain, fever, a new sore or lump, unusual discharge or blood in urine.