



# Lancashire Gynaecologist

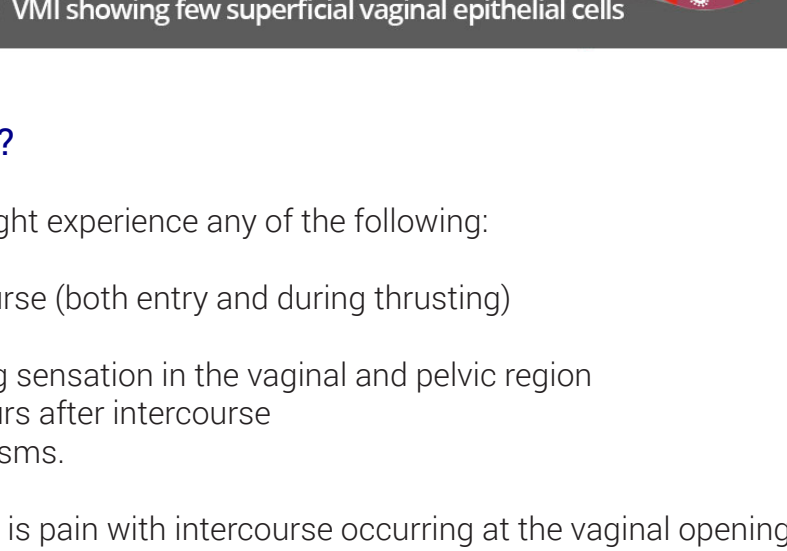
*Eric Mutema*

Dyspareunia (painful  
sexual intercourse)

## Dyspareunia (painful sexual intercourse)

Dyspareunia is a term used to describe persistent or recurrent pain experienced by individuals during sexual intercourse. It is a condition that can affect both men and women, and it can have various causes and manifestations. The pain may be experienced in different areas, such as the genitals, pelvic region, or deep within the pelvis. Dyspareunia can have a significant physical and emotional impact on individuals and their relationships, often leading to decreased sexual satisfaction and intimacy. It is important for those experiencing dyspareunia to seek medical attention to determine the underlying cause and explore appropriate treatment options. This article sets out to explain the symptoms, causes and the possible treatment options for dyspareunia sufferers.

# Dyspareunia Signs & Symptoms



**Common Symptoms of Dyspareunia:**

- Burning or aching pain
- Thinning or sparse pubic hair
- Pain during vaginal penetration
- Pain with every penetration, including tampons
- Throbbing pain that lasts for hours after intercourse

**Signs of Dyspareunia:**

- Clitoral shrinkage
- Bacterial or fungal growth
- Vaginal pH testing exceeding 5.0
- Unnatural appearance of epithelium
- VMI showing few superficial vaginal epithelial cells

### What are the symptoms?

A sufferer of dyspareunia might experience any of the following:

- Pain during sexual intercourse (both entry and during thrusting)
- Pain inserting a tampon
- A general burning or aching sensation in the vaginal and pelvic region
- Throbbing pain, lasting hours after intercourse
- Pelvic cramps, muscle spasms.

The most reported symptom is pain with intercourse occurring at the vaginal opening or deep in the pelvis. It can be a distinct pain in one area, or it may affect the entire genital region. There can be feelings of discomfort, burning or throbbing.

If you are worried about any of the above symptoms, we advise that you speak with your healthcare provider for a proper diagnosis.





## What causes dyspareunia?

There are several causes of dyspareunia:

### Illness, injury and trauma

- Pelvic organ prolapse: if the bladder, bowel or womb has 'dropped' into the vagina, which can sometimes lead to pain when having sex.
- Endometriosis: a condition where tissue similar to the inside of the womb grows outside the womb.
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (infection of the upper reproductive tract – womb, ovaries, or fallopian tubes)
- Fibroids (non-cancerous growths in the womb)
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome - particularly when constipated.
- Radiation or chemotherapy treatment in the pelvic region

### Infections

- Thrush or urinary tract infections (UTIs) resulting in an inflamed or sore vagina
- A UTI or 'water infection', causing the urethra or bladder to become uncomfortable or painful during sex.
- Certain Sexually transmitted diseases, such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea or genital herpes

### Physical problems (resulting in vaginal dryness)

This can include:

- Childbirth
- Breastfeeding
- Menopause which brings about changes in hormone levels
- Certain types of medication
- Too little arousal before penetration
- Muscular tension or weakness in the pelvic floor

### Psychological problems

- Stress
- Relationship problems

### Certain Skin disorders

- Lichen sclerosus - a chronic inflammatory condition that primarily affects the skin in the genital and anal regions

## What do about dyspareunia?

The most important thing to understand is that this isn't uncommon. There is no reason to be embarrassed. Doctors are used to treating this kind of problem, so sufferers should seek medical advice. Treatment will depend on what is causing the pain and the symptoms.

## Treatment options

The treatment options for dyspareunia depend on the underlying cause and may vary from person to person. Here are some common approaches:

**Medical interventions:** If dyspareunia is caused by a specific medical condition, such as vaginal infections, hormonal imbalances, or endometriosis, treating the underlying condition can often alleviate the pain. This may involve medications, such as antibiotics, antifungals, hormone therapy, or pain relievers.

**Pelvic floor therapy:** Dyspareunia can sometimes be attributed to muscular tension or weakness in the pelvic floor. Pelvic floor physical therapy, which includes exercises, manual therapy, and relaxation techniques, can help improve muscle strength, flexibility, and reduce pain.

**Counselling or therapy:** Emotional factors such as anxiety, past traumas, or relationship issues can contribute to dyspareunia. In such cases, therapy or counselling, either individually or as a couple, can be beneficial to address these underlying issues and improve sexual well-being.

**Lubricants and moisturisers:** For individuals experiencing pain due to vaginal dryness, the use of water-based lubricants or vaginal moisturisers can help reduce friction and discomfort during intercourse.

**Education and communication:** Understanding the causes and mechanisms of dyspareunia can empower individuals to communicate their needs effectively with their partners and healthcare providers. Open communication and education about sexual anatomy, arousal, and pain management techniques can contribute to a more fulfilling sexual experience.



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## Talk to the Lancashire Gynaecologist

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider or a specialist, such as a gynaecologist or urologist, who can assess the specific situation and recommend appropriate treatment options based on the individual's needs.

The Lancashire Gynaecologist are a leading experts in female reproductive health and we can offer not only general obstetrics and gynaecology patient care, but it also treatment for specific conditions such as dyspareunia.

Our team offer patients an empathetic, compassionate approach and patient-centred care. This includes a full consultation that will take your overall health into account and subsequent treatments will be tailored to meet your individual needs. So please don't wait and put off seeking treatment if you have any concerns or the symptoms described above. Get in touch, we are here to help you.



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