

# Enjoying your sex life: Issues and solutions for men with physical impairment

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## The importance of sexuality



- › According to the World Health Organization (2011):
  - “sexuality is a central aspect of being human...and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles,...eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction”.
- › Integral to Quality of Life
  - Experiencing intimacy
  - Fulfilling sexual needs and desires
  - Healthy and happy aging

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## Male Sexuality in History

- › Fertility Temple in Chucuito, Peru



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## Male Sexuality in History

- › Sukuh Erotic Temple in Java, Indonesia



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## Male Sexuality in History

- › Shinto/Kanamara Fertility Festival in Kawasaki, Japan (Annually)

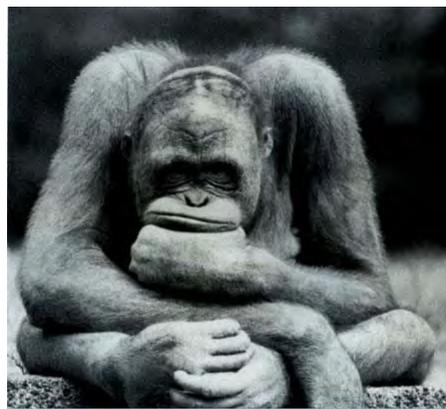


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## Issues encountered by men with impairment

- › It's not that simple, is it?
- › Things to consider:
  - Physical limitations
  - Limited access to information
  - Expectations of masculinity
  - Social aspects



Oh what to do, what to dooo?

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## Physical Limitations

### › Impairment

- Joint disability
- Pain
- HIV and Hepatitis
- medication side-effects



### › Aging

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## Limited access to information

### › Limited resources

### › Particularly for young people

- The role of parents
  - Sexual preparedness
  - Contraception
  - Behaviour options
  - Sexual rights



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## Expectations of masculinity

### › Sexual initiation

- *“Males are competitive so I mean if I’m after one female and there are three other able-bodied males where is she going to go? I was talking to this girl and there were other guys who walked in and they didn’t say ‘hello’ or anything but they could stand and face her. I was in the room but I might as well not have been there.”*

### › The “sick” role

- *“I mean the issue really is if you really claim that you really love someone and that you want to spend your life with them under what terms is that mediated... the standard marriage vows go in sickness and in health and that’s fine. But it doesn’t go in sickness and in constant disease and in constant doctor’s appointments and in constant co-morbidities.”*



### › Having children

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## Social aspects

### › Social expectations and commitments

- Family
- Friends
- Partners
- Workmates
- Parents
- School and work



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## Solutions from men with physical impairment

› Possible solutions include:

- Managing sexual expectations and goals
- Communicating your sexual wants, needs and frustrations with sexual partners
- Engaging health care professionals in discussions about your sexuality
- Exploring your sexuality



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## Managing sexual expectations and goals

- › Having to use condoms
- › Similar emotional, psychological and social issues as peers



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## Communicating sexual wants, needs and frustrations

- › Practice sensitivity
- › Educating (significant ) others
- › Practice closeness
  - emotional and psychological intimacy
- › Trusting others to be empathic, patient and understanding
- › Use social resources



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## Communicating sexual wants, needs and frustrations

- › *Trevor: I feel that communication especially when situating disability and sexuality is important. I try to put [my partners] at ease through humor and honesty about my abilities.*
- › *Ian: Openness with my partner is the key in this regard. I cannot afford to be shy about my needs, as these are discussions that need to happen before physical intimacy.*
- › *Brian: For me, it's all about engaging with my partner to determine their comfort level as well as mine, and working to combine those two. There is no sense in hiding anything, because my physical needs are very apparent, so I have never openly denied MY [participant's emphasis] need for care.*

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## Engaging healthcare professionals

- › Comprehensive health service
- › Managing sexual expectations and goals
- › Providing suggestions and referrals
- › Information for parents of children and adolescents with chronic illness
- › Talking about sex with your doctor/healthcare provider
- › Make a list of questions or queries



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## Exploring your sexuality

- › Try different positions:
  - *“People look at the Kama Sutra and think ‘no way, that’s ridiculous’, but when I actually took some time to look at it I found that some of the positions , or pieces of the positions I could try. My partners thought I was really adventurous, which was great, but also I wasn’t wincing in agony with every thrust.”*
- › Keeping a journal
- › Encouraging young people to make friends and date



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## Useful Resources

### › Haemophilia (Journal)

- Parish, K. L. (2002) Sexuality and haemophilia: connections across the life-span. *Haemophilia*. 8, 353–359.
- Gianotten, W. L. & Heijnen, L. (2009) Haemophilia, aging and sexuality. *Haemophilia*. 15, 55–62.

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› Pictures from Google Images

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