

REGAIN THAT FEELING WITH DR. MITCHELL TEPPER

SEXUAL HEALTH CARE

For Women with Physical Disabilities

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Coaching | Consultation | Speaking | Training



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PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL
FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH
INDUSTRY IN LAST YEAR

No conflicts of interest to disclose

**Intimate
Relationships,
Pleasure, Parenthood**

**Opportunities for Sexual
Expression and
Experiences**

**Safety from Sexual Exploitation &
Abuse, Screening for & Treatment of
STDs, Contraceptive Options**

**Recognition as Sexual Beings, Sexuality
Education, Access to Sexual Health Care:
Architectural, Knowledgeable Providers,
Financial**

ADA Guidelines and Access

Is my office physically accessible?

Am I and my colleagues and staff knowledgeable and culturally competent?

Am I doing my part in serving this population?

Sexual Health Disparities

Summary of 2002-2003 NSFG: Compared to people without disabilities, people with disabilities are . . .

- More likely to have been forced
 - **33% : 15%** ♀ heterosexual vaginal intercourse
- More likely to have had 10 or > lifetime partners
- More likely to have had same sex experiences
 - ♀ 17% : 10%
- More likely to have an STI
 - ♀ with disabilities; 13% : 9%
 - ♀ who have been raped; 24% : 17%
 - the effects are independent



Factors Often Tied To Physical Disabilities

- ❖ Misconceptions about ability to have and enjoy sex
- ❖ Concerns about the safety of having sexual relations
- ❖ Issues around body-image, self-esteem, sexual-esteem
- ❖ Depression, stress and anxiety
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Pain
- ❖ Life experiences (i.e. abuse)
- ❖ Medications
- ❖ Physiologic or mechanical limitations
 - ❖ immobility, spasms, tonicity, contractions,
 - ❖ Bowel and bladder incontinence
 - ❖ diminished or lost sensation



Medication Administration to Optimize Sexual Functioning in WWD

- ❖ Use analgesics (if needed) approximately 30 minutes before sexual activity
- ❖ Reduce or switch to alternative medications that may not have as negative an impact on sexual functioning
- ❖ Try muscle relaxants if hip or lower extremity spasticity interfere with enjoyment and/or performance
- ❖ Treat underlying depression
- ❖ Use a water-based personal lubricant to relieve vaginal dryness during sexual activity



Source: Nusbaum 2003 ⁷ and Nusbaum 2001 ²⁰

Environmental Strategies to Optimize Sexual Functioning in WWD

- ❖ Plan sexual activity when energy level is highest (and when rested and relaxed)
- ❖ Plan sexual activity for time of day when symptoms tend to be the least bothersome
- ❖ Avoid extremes of temperature
- ❖ Experiment with different sexual positions
- ❖ Use pillows to maximize comfort
- ❖ Maintain physical conditioning to highest possible level
- ❖ If sphincter control has been lost, empty bladder & bowel before sexual activity

Sexual Positioning

**Sexual Positions for Women:
Creativity, Adaptability, and
Sense of Humor**