

Managing a chronic pain condition successfully means having the most “normal” lifestyle as possible- including a happy sex life. Your sex life maybe a bit different because of your chronic pain condition, but it doesn't have to be a thing of the past. At the clinic your providers understand that while sex may be a difficult thing for you to talk about it is also important. We respect your privacy and we are also available to discuss your specific concerns and share with you the knowledge we have about improving your sex life if it has been impaired by chronic pain.



Sex &
Chronic Pain



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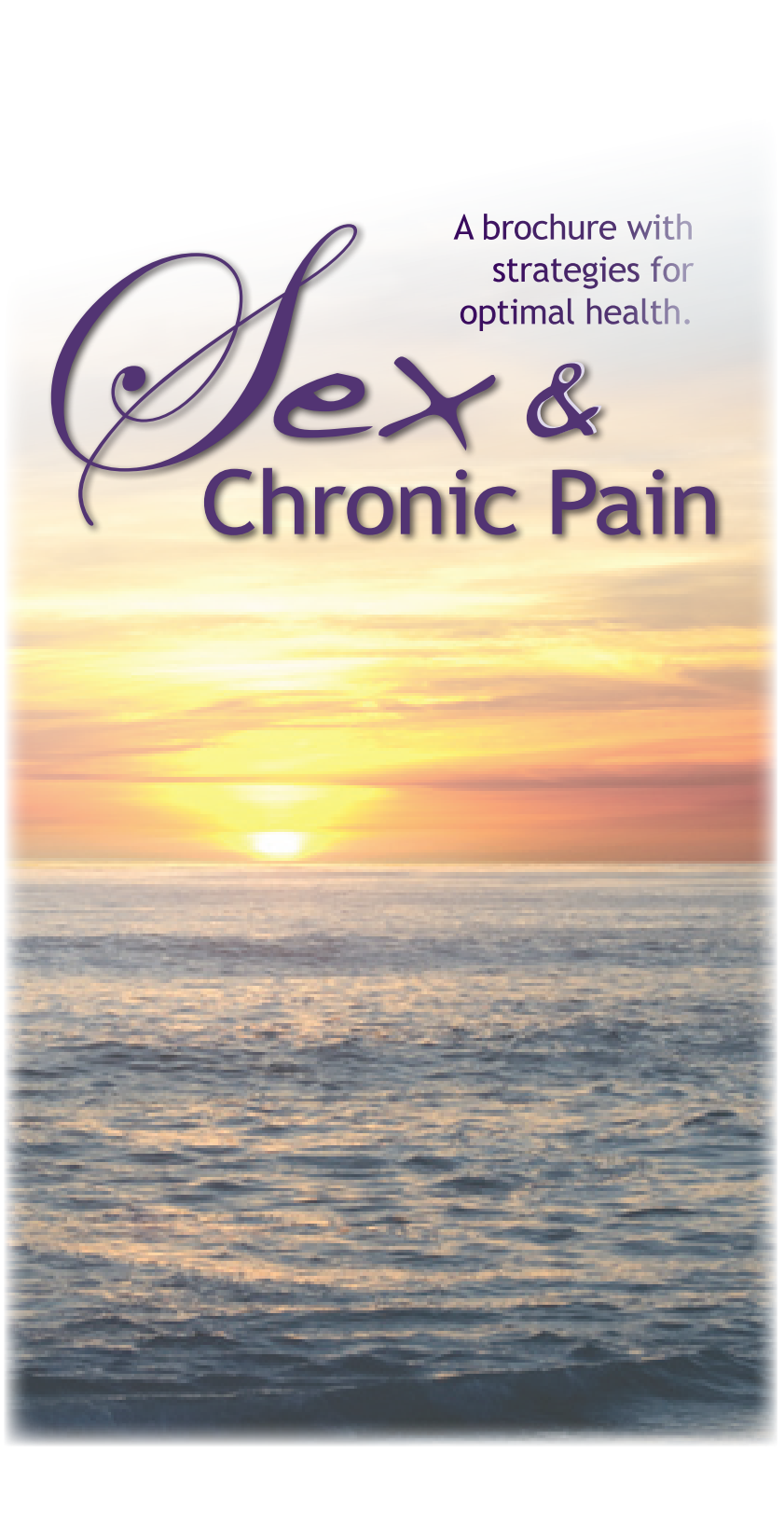
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BAPWC has been awarded the 2nd consecutive three-year accreditation for their interdisciplinary pain rehabilitation programs.

A brochure with strategies for optimal health.



Sex &
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Important aspect of living

Sex is an important aspect of living that can be greatly affected by chronic pain. If you have questions or concerns about how to improve your sexual functioning while living with chronic pain, please do not hesitate to ask someone on the rehab team for help. We've helped many patients to improve their sex life and we are happy to share our knowledge with you. We understand that sex can be a difficult topic for some people to talk about and we will treat your questions and concerns with the utmost respect."

Mind-body connection

As a patient in our clinic you are probably well aware that we emphasize the mind-body connection to obtain optimal health. Sex always involves our mind and body at the same time. Therefore, an approach

that combines physical and mental strategies is most likely to help you reach your goal. Here are some different strategies to consider as you make steps to improve your sex life while living with pain:

Mind

1. Pay attention to your body:

Are you aware of some general patterns of your pain level? Many people who live with chronic pain will describe having higher levels of pain at different times of the day, or with different levels of activity. For example, if your pain level is highest at night after a full day of activity,

2. Communication: Are there certain occasions or particular times of day you and your partner are used to having sex? Does your partner understand that your pain may not be on the same schedule? Open, honest communication is important in any intimate relationship. When one partner's health is compromised,

3. Pacing: As with any other physical activity, it is important to remember to pace your intimate encounters. Many people with pain find it helpful to shift positions frequently because staying in one position over a prolonged period of time can place too much stress on certain body parts. In order to keep sex comfortable and enjoyable, you may want to intersperse less physically demanding activities (stroking, cud-

4. Relaxation: If you've had the experience of having more pain during sex, it would be natural to sometimes be afraid to have sex. Sometimes even thinking of having sex can create more tension and therefore more pain. Take the pressure off of yourself to have sex in a certain way.

5. Patience & perseverance: As you and your partner embark on this adventure to make sex more enjoyable, remember that this can be emotionally charged and potentially frustrating. If you have read this far, it's probably important for you to have an enjoyable sex life. Be

planning on night time sex could be a set up for more discomfort and frustration. Do your best to pick a time of day when you have lower levels of pain. Of course, sometimes pain has a mind of its own, so don't be afraid to throw the planning out the window and go with the flow too.

it's probably wise to pay extra careful attention to good communication. Let your partner know your needs and find out what his/her needs are. If you're having trouble communicating effectively about sex as a couple, it may be a good idea to seek out the help of someone on our behavioral team.

ding, romantic talk) with the more demanding ones. Most people would agree that the most pleasurable sexual encounters are ones where the connection between partners is maintained instead of focusing on specific physical acts. Better to keep your connection with your partner by changing activities than creating more pain by trying to stick with the same activity that's too much for your body.

Remember the purpose of sex is to experience pleasure, so make that your plan. Communicate with your partner about taking things one step at a time with the sole expectation of intimacy and pleasure. Focus on the journey, not the destination.

patient and don't give up. Anything important is worth your effort. Give yourself plenty of time to try new things. If you encounter setbacks, try not to become discouraged or focus on the negative — **keep trying.**

Body

Physical techniques: Back pain is the most common form of chronic pain, but it is certainly not the only kind. It would be impossible to list physical recommendations for sex with all types of chronic pain, however the rehab team can provide you with ideas depending on your specific injury. *Please ask!*

Because back pain is so prevalent, here are some specific techniques that people with back pain may find helpful:

1) In general:

- a. A person with a painful back should lay on his/her back on a firm surface with pillows supporting the knees and head. It may also be comfortable to have a small hand towel rolled/folded and placed under the low back.
- b. A position with both partners on their sides is also comfortable for some.
- c. It is important to keep in mind techniques other than intercourse, such as touching, stroking and massage.

d. Many men with back pain find the following position more comfortable



e. Many women with back pain find the following position more comfortable



2) Flexion: Some people are more comfortable when their spine is bent forward ("flexion"). If you are more comfortable in flexion, chances are your back or legs hurt when you stand, walk or reach overhead. You may also feel better sitting, reclining and in certain positions lying down



a. Men who are more comfortable in flexion often find this position less painful

b. Women who are more comfortable in flexion often find this position less painful.



c. For men and women



3) Other people may be more comfortable when their spine is bent back ("extension"). If you are more comfortable in extension, chances are your symptoms may be relieved by standing or reaching overhead. Sitting and reclining and in certain positions may worsen your pain. Positions may worsen your pain.

a. Men who are more comfortable in extension often find this position less painful.



b. Men who are more comfortable in extension often find this position less painful.



If you do not participate in heterosexual sex, please do not hesitate to ask your rehab team for help.