

Talking about your problem:

It is important that your primary healthcare provider (physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant) know about everything that has to do with your body, your health and how you feel.

Talking about things like vaginal pain, incontinence and other conditions can be embarrassing. You feel like you might be the only person with this problem or maybe you feel like everyone has this problem so you should just learn to live with it. The truth is, pain is never normal and your healthcare provider can't help you if you don't tell them there is a problem.

When you bring the subject up, be honest. Tell him or her that you are embarrassed about the topic, but you really want help. Tell your provider that you are having pain or problems doing things you used to be able to do. This includes sexual relations. There is no need to be shy about talking about something that is a normal part of life.

Tell your provider as much as you can about your symptoms: when they occur, how long they last, what makes them better or worse, when they started, what you've tried so far to improve them.

Don't be afraid to ask about your options. Some providers routinely prescribe medications or make referrals to specialists or order tests. Before embarking upon any one treatment plan, ask for all your options. Then do some research. Look on the Internet, ask friends or family members, call specialists in your area (this can include Physical Therapists) and ask if they routinely treat these problems and what is involved in the evaluation process. Find out as much as you can about your condition and its treatment. But be careful about your sources.

The Internet, especially, is a wonderful tool for education, but be sure that you are looking at sites that are credible.

Finally, remember that it's your body and your health.

You have to care about it first. If your provider doesn't ask you about your condition, that doesn't mean you shouldn't bring it up.