

## BREAKING THE ICE

**Let's face it:** It can be hard to talk about our feminine concerns. Those issues often feel, well... private. But our doctors and nurses are professionals, and they're there to help us through those issues.

If we want help though, they need to know what's going on. Our job is to let them know when we're not feeling quite right down there. Here are a few tips to help you get the conversation started:

1. Know your symptoms. **Highlight or check off the symptoms** you've experienced below. Read the terms aloud instead of trying to find the words yourself, or pass the print-out to your doctor or nurse practitioner if you'd rather.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Burning (while urinating or not) | <input type="radio"/> Painful intercourse         | <input type="radio"/> Urinary incontinence (leaking)    |
| <input type="radio"/> Itching                          | <input type="radio"/> Light bleeding after sex    | <input type="radio"/> Frequent urinary tract infections |
| <input type="radio"/> Dryness                          | <input type="radio"/> A clear or watery discharge |   |
| <input type="radio"/> Vaginal irritation               | <input type="radio"/> Urgency with urination      |   |

2. Focus on the effects. In the days or weeks leading up to your appointment, **pay attention to your symptoms** and how they are affecting you. You may want to make notes to bring to the clinic. Ask yourself a few questions:

- What symptoms have I felt?
- How often do I feel them?
- When do I feel them? (For example: all the time, when I urinate, during or after sex?)
- How bad are they? (Can I tolerate them most days? Are they bearable but still interrupting some activities, like my sex life? Are they bothering me all the time?)

3. Bring up *The Big Ow* early. Make sure you give the doctor or nurse practitioner enough time to get you the help you've come for. **Don't wait until the end of your appointment** to mention *The Big Ow*. Your doctor or nurse practitioner will want to talk to you about your symptoms, and he or she may need to run a test to diagnose the problem.
4. Be direct. Because we don't often hear ourselves say "my vagina...", it may feel awkward to talk about your vaginal discomfort out loud. But **keep in mind that "vagina" is a term your doctor or nurse practitioner is used to hearing**. More importantly, it's a part of the body he or she is used to examining and treating.
5. Take the time to learn more. **Write down your questions** about vaginal atrophy or specific symptoms or treatments before you go to your appointment so you don't forget to ask your doctor or nurse practitioner.
6. **Don't stress!** Remember that what your doctor or nurse practitioner will do during your appointment is routine for him or her. Before you know it, it'll be over and you'll be on your way to feeling better.
7. Be clear about what you want to get from the appointment. Tell your doctor or nurse practitioner that your symptoms are distressing, and **ask about mess-free treatment options** that can help you.

*Print this PDF of tips to help you during your appointment.*