



## Intimacy and Illness: Multiple Sclerosis

### What is multiple sclerosis?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a neurological disease that affects the central nervous system, which includes the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. MS affects the nerves that conduct electrical impulses from the brain and spinal cord to the rest of the body.

### What causes multiple sclerosis?

While no one is sure what causes MS, it is believed that it is an autoimmune disease, which means that the body attacks its own tissue. In the case of MS, the body destroys the nerves in the central nervous system. It is thought that several factors are involved in the development of MS, including genetics, gender, and environmental factors (such as viruses or trauma).

### Who gets multiple sclerosis?

Anyone can be diagnosed with MS, although women are usually more commonly affected. Most people are diagnosed between 20 and 50 years of age. It is estimated that 400,000 Americans currently have MS.

### How can multiple sclerosis affect my sexuality?

Sexual arousal begins in the central nervous system with the brain sending messages to the sexual organs through the spinal cord. Since MS affects the central nervous system, if the nerves are damaged, sexual response could also be affected. According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, 63% of people with MS reported that their sexual activity declined after their diagnosis.

Sexuality can be affected in a number of ways, including:

#### WOMEN

- Reduced sensitivity or feeling in the genitals
- Vaginal dryness
- Difficulty reaching orgasm
- Loss of libido/sexual desire

#### MEN

- Difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection
- Reduced sensation in the genitals
- Difficulty reaching orgasm and/or ejaculation
- Loss of libido/sexual desire

### What can I do to improve my sexuality?

Communicate with your partner about how you are feeling and what you are willing to do (or not do). It may be necessary for you to re-evaluate your definition of sexuality and intimacy. It is possible to be intimate without being sexual, doing things like holding hands or cuddling. Increasing the amount of time spent on foreplay can help with some of the sexual side effects of MS. Using a water-based vaginal lubricant during intimate activities, using an arousal cream, doing Kegel exercises, and using a vaginal moisturizer are all things that can help maintain and improve a woman's sexuality with MS.

Discuss any sexuality issues with your health care provider, who can make treatment recommendations based on your specific issue. Medication may be necessary to help counter the effects of MS.





## What products does Pure Romance offer to help improve my sexuality?

If you find that you have a decreased libido or have a more difficult time reaching orgasm than before, you may want to try an arousal cream, such as Ex-T-Cee, Nympho Niagra, or X-Scream (X-Scream can be used by both men and women). It is also important to use a water-based vaginal lubricant each time you engage in sexual activity, which can help with vaginal dryness. Try Just Like Me or Sweet Seduction, which are both gentle and non-irritating. If you find that a water-based lubricant is not enough to help with vaginal dryness, try a vaginal moisturizer, such as Fresh Start, which is estrogen-free and very gentle.

For men experiencing erectile dysfunction, a c-ring, such as Jelly Tool Belt, can be worn during intercourse and will help men acquire and maintain an erection. (It is highly recommended to use a thick, creamy lubricant, such as Whipped, when using a c-ring.)

You can also get other product recommendations from your Pure Romance Consultant or by visiting our Web site.

