How to Maintain Intimacy With Lupus

by ANNA SCANLON

Understanding Intimacy With Lupus

Maintaining intimacy with a partner despite lupus can be a very tricky matter. For some, the pain and fatigue associated with lupus can make it difficult to muster the energy to have a sexual relationship, while for others the medications they are on may reduce their libido.

For other lupus patients the bodily changes lupus can cause, from hair loss from lupus to steroid-induced weight gain, can make them feel much less desirable and less likely to want to have sex, even if they trust their partner completely. However, there are ways to maintain intimacy in a relationship despite these issues.

Communication

It may sound cliché, but communication is absolutely essential. If you are a lupus patient in a long-term relationship and feeling either apprehensive about sex or in too much pain to enjoy it, it is extremely important to sit down and discuss it with your partner.

Although your partner may be incredibly understanding, they cannot be expected to be a mind reader. If your hesitance for sex hinges on certain aspects of your disease, communication will help your partner understand what's going on.

If you don't have a discussion about your fears, pain, loss of libido, or whatever it is that is causing you to feel less than thrilled about having sex, your partner may feel you are pulling away. They may start to think it is a symptom of another issue in your relationship or that you lack attraction to them.

Therefore, it is very important you discuss everything candidly and thoroughly. Remember, even though you are suffering with lupus, it is also important to listen to your partners' feelings on the matter as you are in a relationship together.

A good and trustworthy partner will understand your concerns or hesitations and not pressure you, but as it is a partnership, it is important to take their feelings into consideration as well.

Pain Killers

If arthritis or other lupus pain makes sex less enjoyable, you can always try planning sex and taking painkillers about an hour before you're intimate. Although this may take away a bit of the spontaneity in your sex life, it can help make it pain-free and more enjoyable for both partners.

Often times for women, if sex is painful for any reason, it can make her dread sex the next time. However, the more pain-free experiences you have, the more you can look forward to intimacy with your partner.

Be Prepared

For some women, lupus can severely reduce their libido or make their vaginal area particularly dry despite being aroused. In order to help remedy this, make using lube a big part of your routine.

If penetration occurs while the vagina is too dry, it can cause an irritating rubbing sensation or even pain, which makes sex a lot less pleasurable. Water-based lubricants can be used with or without condoms and won't effect any contraceptive use either. It can also be used during oral and manual sex.

Know When to Rest or Stop

For many, sex can be about bringing their partner to orgasm. However for many lupus patients, especially women, it can be difficult to reach orgasm if pain and sensitivity is involved.

Instead of focusing on your partner reaching orgasm, instead focus on enjoying each other's company and the stimulation of each other's bodies. If at any point it becomes too painful to carry on, communicate this to your partner and rest or stop altogether.

Sex should be about bonding, mutual intimacy and pleasure, not about gritting your teeth through enormous pain just to please your partner.

Switch Positions

If you have a lot of arthritis pain, you may find some positions are not sustainable for long periods of time. Find a position that works for both you and your partner that doesn't provide too much stress on your joints.

Being on the bottom is often easiest, as it doesn't put any particular pain or stress on your joints. If you like experimenting with different positions, you can always try several during one sex session, and then moving to the position that is the least stressful for your joints once you are unable to hold it.

Body Image

Body image is a big issue with many lupus patients, especially for those who have lost hair or gained a significant amount of weight. They may feel less sexy than they used to be or wonder why their partner would still want to be intimate with them.

However, it is important you honestly communicate these insecurities to your partner so they are aware of how you are feeling. A genuine and honest partner will attempt to reassure you that no matter what, you are still attractive to them.

After all, a long-standing relationship is not just about sex, but about so much more than that. A partner who truly loves you will still want to be with you and have sex with you, despite your current (and mostly likely temporary) physical appearance.

Stop If You Can't Go On

While scheduling sex at the best parts of your day (such as avoiding morning sex if you're not a morning person or taking pain killers beforehand), switching positions and discussing your fears with your partner can all aid in intimacy, you also shouldn't pressure your body into something you feel you can't do.

If you find yourself physically hurting during sex or that the fatigue or pain is just too much, let your partner know you do find them attractive and want to have sex with them, you are just hurting far too much to continue.

You can find alternatives to strenuous sex such as mutual masturbation or oral sex, which can be just as initiate

as sex itself. But it is incredibly important that you don’t do anything your feel your body isn’t up to, as this can cause much more harm than good.