

# Speak Up

Safeguarding People who use  
Augmentative Communication from  
Sexual Abuse/Victimization

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# **Sex & Disability Questions & Answers**

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Easy for You to Say

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**Q: Okay, what's the bottom line?  
Can I have sex or not?**

**A:** Everyone can have sex. Not everyone can have sexual intercourse, and intercourse may not be enjoyable for some people who can accomplish it.

But (I repeat) everyone can have sex.

Sex that does not include intercourse is still real sex.

Easy for You to Say  
Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## Q: Can I have sex or not?

**A:** You probably wouldn't be asking this question if we didn't live in a society where people with illnesses or disabilities weren't seen as being asexual.

What lies beneath this attitude isn't clear to me.

What is the benefit to our culture as a whole to have a group of people who are regarded as being unable to have sex?

Easy for You to Say  
Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## **Q: Can I have sex or not?**

**A:** All of us are created as sexual beings.

There are great differences in the levels of sexual desire and in levels of sexual activity. There are special considerations, but they don't mean you can't have sex.

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Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## Q: Can I have sex or not?

**A:** A definition of sex that is broader than just intercourse is something we need to adopt.

Surveys have shown that many women get more pleasure from sexual activities other than intercourse.

Intercourse is also a high risk behavior in the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

Intercourse can lead to pregnancy.

A focus on sex as intercourse is, in my opinion the basis for a high number of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and people who are unhappy with their sex lives.

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Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## Q: Can I have sex or not?

**A:** Having sex with yourself is not a "second best" option.

It is good to get to know your capabilities and does not carry the risk that intercourse does.

If you have difficulty moving your hands or controlling your movements, you may be able to masturbate by using a vibrator which is available by catalogue and in many stores or you may be able to position yourself so that a spray of water from a shower or hose in the bathtub hits your genitals.

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Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## **Q: Can I have sex or not?**

**A:** Water should not be sprayed into your vagina.

Some people find that it enriches their sexual fantasies to read sexy books, watch films with sex scenes or look at pictures.

Only do what you are comfortable doing.

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## Q: Can I have sex or not?

**A:** Sometimes, difficulties in controlling your movements may make masturbation and caressing your partner difficult.

You need a partner who can have a sense of humor about getting bopped occasionally. Your partner can caress you and stimulate you in a number of ways.

If your movements make it impossible for you to get physically close enough to have sex, you can still be with your partner while you masturbate (perhaps using an aid), watch movies or communicate about sex.

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Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## Q: Can I have sex or not?

**A:** If you have spasticity:

- You may find that your spasms vary, depending on how relaxed and comfortable you are with your partner.
- If they are fairly mild, you may just need to take your time and find positions that help you relax.
- Intercourse can be difficult or even impossible for a person with a lot of spasticity.

Easy for You to Say  
Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## **Q: Can I have sex or not?**

**A:** Even if your legs are relaxed, muscle spasms can occur in your vaginal muscles, interfering with penetration and causing pain.

Having a partner stimulate you with his or hers hands or mouth can be more workable.

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## **Q: Can I have sex or not?**

**A:** If this doesn't work, you can still be together while you each masturbate, using whatever techniques you've found enjoyable, or while you watch sexy movies or communicate about sex.

Easy for You to Say  
Dr. Miriam Kaufman

**Q: I am a woman who has cerebral palsy, can I use the birth control pill?**

**A:** The birth control pill is usually not recommended for anyone who is at increased risk of getting blood clots, and some doctors consider this to include people who spend most of their time in a wheelchair.

You may find it difficult to insert a diaphragm.

Condoms are usually a good method but can be a problem if both partners have difficulty using their hands.

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Dr. Miriam Kaufman

**Q: I've never had sex with anyone. I'm incontinent and wear a diaper. I do also use the bathroom - my incontinence is dribbling that happens in between. I'm worried about having sex and what my partner might think.**

**A:** The first thing to remember is that between female lubrication and male ejaculation, sex is a fairly messy business anyway.

So things might not be as difficult as you think.

Easy for You to Say  
Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## Incontinence...

**A:** The second thing is that sex always has to be planned to a certain extent. Unplanned sex carries a high risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.

You are going to have to plan sex more than many people, but that doesn't mean you have to lose enjoyment.

It is hard to know what potential partners will think until you ask them.

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## Incontinence...

**A:** Some people may be totally turned off.

Many will see it as a minor inconvenience.

You should bring it up beforehand.

You don't want to end up in bed with someone who is going to weird about it.

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## Incontinence...

**A:** Anyone who is incontinent and has the ability to empty his or her bladder either by going to the bathroom or catheterizing should do so before having sex.

Even if you do this, you will probably want to have a rubber or plastic sheet on the bed. This obviously means you can't have sex on the backseat of a car.

If you are going to be at your partner's place, you will have to bring or leave a plastic sheet there.

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## **Q: Can I get pregnant if I have cerebral palsy?**

**Q:** There are several questions here:

- Will pregnancy affect your health?
- Will your state of health affect your pregnancy?
- What are the chances your child will have the same condition as you?

**A:** The easy answer is that you and your partner should speak with your doctor.

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Dr. Miriam Kaufman

## Pregnancy and CP...

**A:** Consider spending time figuring out what all your questions are and take them with you to your appointment.

Here is some general information but remember that everyone is different so you should still talk with your doctor.

Whether you are male or female, if you are able to have intercourse your fertility will probably not be affected by your condition.

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## Pregnancy and CP...

**A:** If you are unable to have intercourse, then artificial insemination with your partner's semen can be used.

If spasms are a problem for the pregnant woman, the delivery may be difficult and a cesarean section may be needed.

CP is not genetic, so you cannot pass it on to your children, although they have the same chance of having CP as any other child.

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