INTIMACY TIPS FROM A SEX THERAPIST

CAPP ◆ ACPP
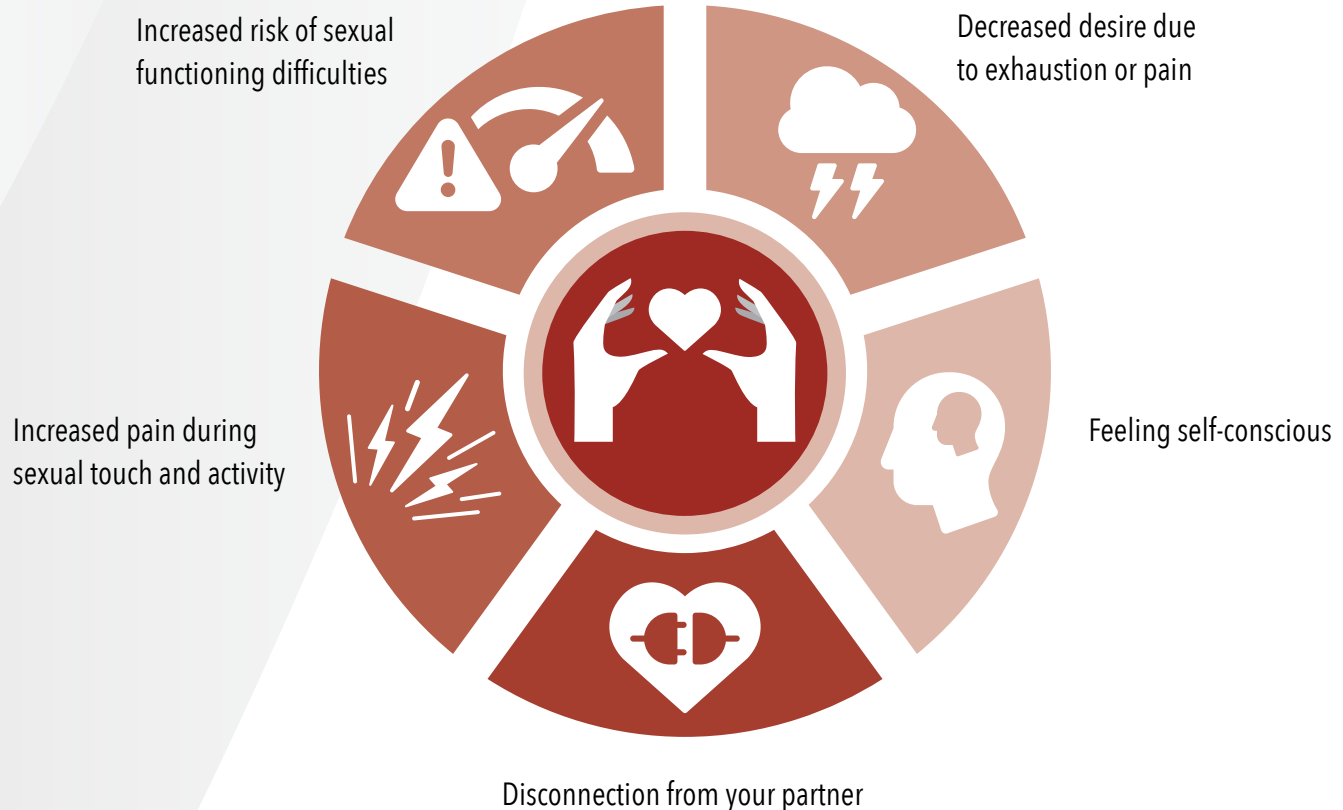Canadian Association of Psoriasis Patients
Association canadienne des patients atteints de psoriasis

All of us want intimacy and connection in some way – this can be challenging when our bodies feel like they're in the way of experiencing the touch, passion, and closeness with our partners that we want.

HOW PSORIASIS CAN AFFECT SEX & INTIMACY

Increased risk of sexual functioning difficulties

Decreased desire due to exhaustion or pain

Increased pain during sexual touch and activity

Feeling self-conscious

Disconnection from your partner

FIND YOUR DESIRE

It's hard to get in the mood when you're exhausted and in pain – let's normalize this!

- Desire is created when we can positively anticipate a pleasurable experience or actively engage in a pleasurable experienc
- Create less pressure about having a certain type of sex and focus on pleasurable touch, regardless if it's sexual or non-sexual in nature
- When we experience less pressure and more pleasure, we want more of it!
- Create regular times at a frequency that works for your relationship to be intimate – be open to all types of intimacy during this time and not just sex

CREATING OPEN COMMUNICATION ABOUT SEX & INTIMACY

You deserve to have intimacy and a great sex life with your partner! The number one way to have better sex is to get better at **communicating** *about it – when your psoriasis flares up or you're feeling low energy, being able to turn to your partner and be an intimate team will ensure you continue to have the intimacy you want for the long run.*

- Let your partner know that you want to start talking about your sex life more frequently
  - "Our sex life is really important to me and I want us to start talking about it more regularly so we can make sure we're both happy. I know it can feel uncomfortable, and it's awkward to even mention that, but you are important to me and I want to make this a priority for us".
- Focus on what you do like and express what you want to experience more of – this can help your partner be open to trying new things rather than shut down
- Set aside time weekly to talk about your relationship as a whole and include sex as a part of that
  - Decide how frequently you'd like to meet (recommend at least once a week!) and for how long (recommend at least 30 minutes and up to 1 hour)
  - **The key to having positive experiences with these conversations is to resist the urge to problem solve when our partner is sharing. Just listen and offer reflection and validation for your partner to encourage them to continue to share and talk.**
  - Take turns asking the following questions:
    - ▲ How has this week been for you?
    - ▲ Is there anything that happened this week between us that you're still thinking about?
    - ▲ How has our intimacy felt for you this week? Do you feel like our sex life is working for you right now?
    - ▲ What is one thing we could do differently for the rest of today or this week that will help us feel more connected?

WHEN IT'S TOO PAINFUL TO BE INTIMATE

Remember that intimacy and sex is so much more than just intercourse or genital stimulation – it is the passion, vulnerability, presentness, pleasure-focused, intimate, erotic touch and connection we have with our partners.

- Discover new ways of intimacy that both you and your partner enjoy
  - This can include sexual and non-sexual touch
  - *Not sure what else you might like?* Explore! Touch each other in new ways. Share fantasies. Use toys. Watch erotic shows or clips together. Read erotica.
- Focus on parts of your body that you experience little or no pain when being touched
- See if different positions may result in less pain
  - Do different laying positions result in less pain? Try a sex pillow, cushion, or wedge if you notice that some angles hurt less than others
- Try lubricant
  - A cooling lubricant may help the burning or painful sensations on your skin – try it on one spot of your skin before putting it on more sensitive areas

Having a great sex life with chronic illness is possible – communicate with your partner about your worries and your desires and create a shift in your sex life that accommodates the type of touch and pleasure that feel good to you. (Hint: it may be different than for others or what it was before – as long as it's connecting and pleasurable to you, you're doing it right!)