

Painful intercourse

RFQs

- What was going on in your life when this first started? (This sort of problem can be triggered by a distressing situation. Could that be possible in your case? Might you have been abused in any way?)
- What is your sex drive like? Are you particularly anxious about having sex?
- Do you have any vaginal discharge?
- When was your last period? Was it normal? What are you doing about contraception?
- Is the pain as penetration is attempted, or deep inside? Are you able to insert a tampon or a finger?
- Do you have a vulval skin condition or any sores?

Provide

I'd suggest that we do a really gentle examination of your vagina. Would you prefer me to arrange for a female doctor (or nurse) to do that? We can arrange is for a day when you are not on you period, according to you preference.

I know you were worried that you had picked up a sexually transmissible infection, but your vaginal examination did not suggest that. I have taken 2 swabs to check for infection, to give you extra reassurance.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORING SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Setting the scene, eg:

- 'how are things at home?'
- 'I am concerned that we have already seen you in A&E three times this year . . and it is important that I ask about your safety'
- I am concerned that this injury seems to be more severe than I would expect from tripping...
- 'it is good that you have asked for emergency contraception . . can I just ask whether the sex that happened was with your consent?'
- 'are you safe to go home?' HARK questions*

• H HUMILIATION

Within the last year, have you ever been humiliated or emotionally abused in other ways by your partner or ex-partner?

• A AFRAID

Within the last year, have you been afraid of your partner or ex-partner?

• R RAPE

Within the last year have you been raped or forced to have any kind of sexual activity by your partner or ex-partner?

• K KICK

Within the last year, have you been kicked, hit slapped or otherwise physically hurt by your partner or ex-partner

*(screening questions developed for use in general practice (Sohal, 2011)

Safety net:

Please phone next week, to check on the results of the 2 swabs that I have taken to check that there is no infection. We need to see you if you have bleeding with intercourse, or unusual discharge from your vagina.

This must be so distressing for you. Would you be happy to read some more about this condition? And perhaps you would be happy to come and see me again, or speak to me on the phone, to decide the best way forward for you.

- Refer patients who have experienced sexual abuse, mental health difficulties or those who wish to conceive.
- Education and desensitisation with vaginal trainers are the mainstay of treatment.