Women’s Sexual Physiology

Lecture Objectives

- Discuss how sexual health changes through the life span.
- Define sexual dysfunction, and name at least two types.
Women and Their Bodies

- Many women uncomfortable or unfamiliar with their own bodies
- Need to learn about anatomy, as well as correct terms for structures and functions
  - Improves knowledge
  - Improves sense of well-being

Sexual Arousal for Women

- Highly individualized experience
- Involves all senses
- Sexual pleasure & satisfaction are based in both *psychology* & *physiology* (usually intertwined):
  - *Psychological* feelings of arousal
  - *Physiological* reactions follow
Forms of Sexual Expression

- Traditional sexual positions
- Masturbation
- Petting
- Oral-genital stimulation (cunnilingus, fellatio)
- Anal intercourse
- Use of sex toys and accessories

Sexual Dysfunction

- Chronic inability to respond sexually in a way that one finds satisfying

Prevalence

- According to the U.S. National Health and Social Life Survey, 43% of women suffer from sexual dysfunction
Types of Sexual Dysfunction

1. Sexual desire disorders
   1. Hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD)
   2. Sexual aversion disorder
2. Sexual arousal disorders
3. Orgasmic disorders
4. Sexual pain disorders
   1. Vaginismus

Sexuality through the Lifespan

A: Childhood
- Self-genital stimulation
- Engage in play that may be viewed as sexual in nature
- Curious about secondary sex characteristics
Sexuality through the Lifespan

B: Adolescence

- Puberty
  - Menarche
  - Secondary sex characteristics
    - Hair growth, breast budding, vaginal walls thicken, uterus enlarges, vaginal pH increases in acidity
- First intercourse average = 17.4 years

Sexuality through the Lifespan

C: Young to middle adulthood

- Increasing number of single sexually active adults
- Marriage at later age
- Increase in the number of women who never marry
- Placing career goals and advanced education before marriage
- Increased divorce rate
- Increase in cohabitating adults
Sexuality through the Lifespan

D: Older adulthood

- **Climacteric**—physiological changes that occur during period from female fertility to infertility
- **Menopause**—cessation of menstruation
  - Vaginal dryness and thinning, delayed lubrication, hot flashes
- Decline in frequency and intensity of sexual activity
- Quality vs. quantity of sexual expression

Lecture Wrap Up

- **Key Terms:**
  - Anatomical structures; sexual desire disorders; sexual arousal disorders; orgasmic disorders; sexual pain disorders
- **Individual Health Importance:**
  - Understand unique facets of your own sexuality, including physiology
- **Public Health Importance:**
  - Disorders that affect women’s reproductive health
- **Social/Political Importance:**
  - Commercialization of products related to general health and disorders