



## Menopause's Effect On Sexual Health

(NAPSA)—Although most women associate hot flashes, night sweats and mood swings with menopause, many are not aware that menopause may also cause changes that can lead to vaginal dryness and painful intercourse. These changes can negatively impact a woman's sexual health, yet many women are not discussing them.

According to a recent online survey conducted by HealthyWomen and Harris Interactive, with support from Pfizer Inc., more than half of the 1,043 postmenopausal women surveyed reported experiencing vaginal dryness (56 percent), and one in four reported experiencing painful intercourse (26 percent). Among the women surveyed who reported experiencing menopausal symptoms, the majority indicated that vaginal dryness (80 percent) or painful intercourse (92 percent) negatively impacted their frequency of intercourse. Yet nearly all who reported experiencing painful intercourse admitted they still engage in it even though it is painful (93 percent)—with 40 percent engaging in intercourse at least once a week.

"Vaginal dryness and painful intercourse are common symptoms of menopause, but left untreated, these symptoms can continue to cause pain and discomfort," said Dr. Michael Krychman, executive director of the Southern California Center for Sexual Health and Survivorship Medicine in Newport Beach, California, and consultant for the survey. "Too many women are choosing to ignore these symptoms instead of discussing them with their health care professional, and this is contributing to an overall negative impact on women's sexual health."

In fact, as Dr. Krychman points out, almost half of the women sur-



**Women should discuss painful symptoms with their health care professionals.**

veyed who have experienced vaginal dryness (45 percent) or painful intercourse (41 percent) admitted they have not spoken to their health care professional about their condition. Women who had not discussed their symptoms with their health care professional cited embarrassment as the main reason for not speaking about their vaginal dryness (30 percent) or painful intercourse (33 percent), followed by the belief that there is nothing that can be done medically to help their condition.

And of those who had spoken to their health care professional, two in five who reported experiencing painful intercourse (39 percent) and one in four who reported experiencing vaginal dryness (27 percent) waited more than two years before they had the discussion.

Although it may be somewhat uncomfortable, discussing these symptoms with a health care professional is the first step to finding symptom relief. For more information about the HealthyWomen survey and the vaginal symptoms of menopause, visit [www.PersonalMenopauseAnswers.com](http://www.PersonalMenopauseAnswers.com) or [www.HealthyWomen.org](http://www.HealthyWomen.org).