



Identifying the likely causes of sexual issues can help you be prepared to deal with them. Sabrina Rogers-Anderson spoke to Désirée Spierings, director of Sexual Health Australia.

1 Performance anxiety

This isn't an issue that only affects teenage boys – it can happen to anyone, often at the start of a new relationship.

"When you first meet someone, you may be very nervous about making the right impression and this can cause performance anxiety," says Désirée.

2 Mismatched sex drives

At the beginning of a relationship, your hormones run wild and you just can't seem to get enough of each other. Over time, these hormones decrease.

"When limerence [the initial stage of deep infatuation] is over, your bonding hormone, oxytocin, kicks in," explains Désirée. "You trust one another in the bedroom and may feel more comfortable to try new things, but you may also find out that you have different levels of libido, which can cause difficulties."

3 The pressures of trying to conceive

Couples that are trying to conceive can sometimes find that their sex drives plummet and performance issues crop up.

"For women, it can cause a lot of stress and sex tends to become more of a baby-making tool than an expression of love or affection for one another," says Désirée. "For men, it can cause performance anxiety due to the pressure of having to perform at a certain time."

4 Issues during pregnancy

Pregnancy can present various sexual challenges.

"The woman may not feel sexy, or quite the contrary, she may have a spike in her sexual desire – this is common in the second trimester," notes Désirée. "But the man may find it strange to have sex with a pregnant woman or he may be afraid to hurt the baby."

5 Sex after baby

"Some men suffer from the Madonna/whore complex, where they find it difficult to sexualise their partner because she's now the mother of their child," says Désirée. "For many women, the baby becomes the priority. They have a huge to-do list and being intimate with their partner is often the last thing on it."

6 Life gets in the way

As couples try to balance work, family and social activities, sex can fall by the wayside.

"Being intimate doesn't happen as much, and couples have to recognise these changes in order to reconnect and have fun together again," says Désirée.

7 Ageing

According to Désirée, menopause can create several sexual difficulties for women, such as a decline in vaginal lubrication, breast swelling, pre-orgasmic sweating and a decrease in orgasm potential. Older men can have difficulties getting and maintaining erections, less rigid erections, decreased intensity of ejaculation and ejaculatory volume, delayed ejaculation and an increased refractory period.