

## Why is talking to Clients about Sex Important?

*"My catheter was fitted so I could wear a bikini, but awkwardly positioned for having sex. When I pointed out to my consultant that I preferred sex to sunbathing, he said "OK, let's reposition it then. As a result, my husband and I have had a lot more fun!"*

Alexandra

Sex was once seen as something most people simply wanted and enjoyed. Research now shows that sex is something people positively benefit from.

In fact, a regular, happy sex life brings a range of physical, emotional and relationship benefits — it positively adds to health, and some studies even suggest it prolongs life.

Conversely, an unhappy sex life, and/or the loneliness that may come from being without a partner, can lead to stress, depression or illness (not being able to touch oneself and never getting touched or hugged can be particularly damaging).

And if loneliness and lack of sex is as a result of chronic illness or disability, then the impact can reverberate throughout one's whole life.

For all these reasons, it can enormously benefit clients if health and social care professionals are willing to talk about sexuality as part of the consultation — and where there are problems, be able to provide support or a referral in order to solve those problems.

The good news is that sexual problems are very often fixable, either with medical or counselling intervention. In fact, neither may be necessary — it may simply be that the client is just unsure about something sexually; this is quite natural and common. The health or social care professional can almost always offer help of some sort.

The first step is to talk, and talking usually helps. Both clients and professionals may hold back from starting the conversation, but it's vital to do so. Communication works wonders!