

Between the Sheets

Got a blush-worthy question? Bring it on!

Q I'm dating a great guy, but the sex is ho-hum. Does that mean we're doomed?

A Not at all. "Though some couples have instant chemistry, most have to work at having more satisfying sex," says Yvonne K. Fulbright, Ph.D., author of *Sultry Sex Talk to Seduce Any Lover*. That's because it takes some time to get comfortable and learn how to get each other going. Communication is key—you don't want him to get defensive or feel like you're criticizing him, so put a positive spin on the subject. **"Start by talking to your partner about his wants and asking how you can be a better lover to him,"** she suggests. That should prompt him to ask you about what you enjoy. If he doesn't inquire, go ahead and offer some creative suggestions. "You could mention how fun it would be to have a private show-and-tell, during which you can demonstrate how you like to be touched," says Fulbright. "For all you know, he's applying the same moves that pleased his last girlfriend, assuming that they work for everyone. You need to train him!"



Q When should I talk to my kids about sex?

A There's no time like the present. **Make sexuality an ongoing topic of conversation throughout your child's life** instead of having one big sit-down about the birds and the bees when puberty hits, says Leslie Kantor, vice president of education for Planned Parenthood Federation of America. "Look for teachable moments at every age and stage." With very young kids, it could be as simple as telling them the biological names for their body parts during bath time. When your son or daughter reaches elementary school, you might broaden the conversation about how babies are made. For tweens and teens, use examples from their lives—like steamy

television scenes—as a way of opening a dialogue.

The payoff: Research shows that teens who report having good conversations with their parents about sex are more likely to make smarter decisions about when to become sexually active, have fewer partners, and use birth control when they do have sex than those who don't. All the way along, it's important to emphasize that no question is off-limits and that they can trust you to provide honest information that reflects your values. For some talking points, go to plannedparenthood.com.

Q My Pap was abnormal, but my HPV test was fine. How is this possible?

A It's unusual but not unheard of, says Mount Kisco, NY-based

68
percent of men
and 59 percent of
women believe in
love at first sight.

SOURCE: AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION SURVEY

ob-gyn Alyssa Dweck, M.D., coauthor of *V Is for Vagina*. "While most abnormal Pap smears, which indicate suspicious-looking cells in the cervix, are caused by the presence of the human papillomavirus (HPV), they can sometimes point to other conditions as well, such as a yeast or bacterial infection or an STD," she explains. In some cases,

the irregular cells can simply be a result of recent intercourse, douching, or using a tampon—all of which can irritate your cervix.

If an HPV test turns up negative, what happens next will depend on your personal history and any other signs of trouble found during your exam, says Dweck. If you've been sore or itchy, your ob/gyn might recommend medication to treat a yeast or bacterial infection. If you feel good and haven't had an abnormal Pap or tested positive for HPV in recent years, however, she may very well tell you not to worry and come back in a year.

Do you have a question you'd like us to address? Email it to youasked@shape.com and put "sex health" in the subject line.