

# sexuality & health

a confidential counselling service

## who are we?

The Austin Health Sexual Health Counselling Service is a free, completely confidential and non-judgemental service with a qualified sexual counsellors.

This service aims to support Austin Health patients and/or their partners to adjust to changes to their sexuality and sexual functioning due to illness, injury or disability. This can be made possible by exploring ways to be intimate, communicate more easily, adjust to loss and find other options.

Many people find talking about sexual concerns difficult. The Austin Health sexual Health Counsellors can provide an opportunity to talk about sexual concerns and fears in a private and confidential environment.

Depending on your concerns, the service can offer you information, suggestions and new approaches to sexuality through individual and/or couple counselling.

## who can benefit from our service?

Illness, injury and/or disability can affect many aspects of our lives, including our sexuality. This can change our self-image and self-esteem. Sometimes people find the experience lonely and isolating, and wonder who they can share their feelings and concerns with. This is where the service can help.

This service is all for Austin Health patients in hospital or at home and/or for their partners. Clients may be single, in a relationship, of any age, lifestyle, sexual preference, religious or spiritual orientation.

## how can you contact us?

**Phone:** Call the Austin Health Sexual Health Counselling Service on (03) 9496 4732  
Please leave a message if we are not available. Confidentiality guaranteed.

**Address:** Sexual Health Counselling Service  
Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre  
1 Yarra Boulevard  
Kew Victoria 3101

The Austin Health Sexual Health Counselling Service accepts referrals from Austin Health staff. Patients and partners of patients can also refer themselves directly to the service.

**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**



## Austin Health Sexual Health Counselling Service

Everybody's needs are different. These are some of the sexual concerns frequently expressed by people living with illness, injury and/or disability.

# what can we offer?

### **"Sex no longer feels the same. Will I ever be able to enjoy it again?"**

When people's bodies change, it can be difficult to imagine feeling satisfied again. The Sexual Health Counsellor can help you adjust to these changes by offering practical suggestions and supporting you to explore new ways to express yourself.

### **"I can't do the things I used to - my partner has so much to do now"**

There may be changes in roles. Assistance to acknowledge these changes can enhance your relationship and create a balance between the roles of lover and carer.

### **"Now that I have to take these tablets, I find things don't work like they used to"**

Many things can affect people's ability or desire to have sex, including some medications. The Sexual Health Counsellor can provide you with information about the potential effects of medications and possible ways to improve sex.

### **"Since my operation, I no longer feel attractive and don't want to be touched"**

An illness or any injury can alter the way people look and feel about themselves. Sometimes they can miss their old selves. There are many ways to renew your confidence, and we can support you with this.

### **"I though because of my injury/illness, I would never be able to have sex again."**

No matter what state of health you are experiencing, it is possible to be sexual. There are many ways to explore this.

### **"Ever since I found out about my illness, my partner does not touch me"**

An illness or injury may impact on a relationship in many ways. Both of you may feel lonely and confused. Counselling can help both of you to clarify your feelings and help you to share them with each other and feel closer again

### **"Now that I am living with a chronic condition, how could anyone want me?"**

When someone's health changes it can be very challenging. The Sexual Health Counsellor can support you to feel that relationships are possible.

### **"Since I have been sick, I have been too afraid to have sex again."**

After an illness, many people are worried about resuming sexual activity. The service can provide information, practical suggestions and support to help you to feel more confident to be sexual again.

### **"I don't know how to have sex with my partner anymore. I am frightened I will hurt them"**

Partners frequently express this concern. There are many ways you can have a safe and satisfying sexual relationship.

### **"I feel so lonely and crave to be cuddled"**

All human beings have a need to be touched and feel loved. The Sexual Health Counsellor

self-esteem

intimacy

sex

love