

Is Your Vagina Depressed?

Submitted by: Capsule Communications (JWPR)

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Remember that iconic scene in *Sex and The City* when Charlotte gets diagnosed with a depressed vagina? We definitely do...

Did you know that the correct scientific terminology for 'a depressed vagina' as Charlotte describes in the scene is vulvodynia; a persistent, unexplained pain around the vulva which can affect approximately one in ten women. We spoke with femfresh Health Expert Dr Frankie Jackson-Spence who knows all about the issue and how it may affect women physically and mentally, as well as providing expert advice on how to potentially avoid it.

Dr Frankie quotes: "Everything may look normal down below, but women can experience a persistent unexplained pain which may feel sore like a burning, stinging or throbbing pain. This is medically described as vulvodynia which can affect women of all ages and be very distressing, affecting their mood and relationships, with some women unfortunately feeling embarrassed to talk about it. Women should consult their doctor if they notice any change to rule out other causes such as thrush, urine infections and sexually transmitted infections before attributing to the discomfort to vulvodynia." She goes onto explain: "it's also important to note, vulvodynia does not usually cause rashes or vaginal discharge, so if women notice any change from normal, they should see a doctor."

As the cause for vulvodynia is still unknown, medical experts believe it is due to pain receptors around the intimate skin being too sensitive to touch, which could have been caused by childbirth or even trapped nerves. Dr Frankie emphasises "as there are no definitive treatments for vulvodynia, it's very important to ensure symptoms are not due to infection, which can be easily treated, with some cases often prescribed with a type of anti-depressant" which is highlighted within the *Sex and The City* clip when Charlotte visits her doctor. Dr Frankie quotes the scene with Charlotte and her doctor within *Sex and The City* should be taken light-heartedly as it is "a myth that your vagina is depressed but instead these certain anti-depressants are good for treating 'neuropathic pain' which is caused by hypersensitivity of nerve endings."

Now if Charlotte's vagina journal isn't the right solution for you, Dr Frankie offers some other tips for dealing with vulvodynia, including avoiding irritants such as fragranced soaps and opting for a pH balanced intimate product such as the femfresh Soothing Wash, which is gynecologically and dermatologically tested and is gentle on the intimate skin. It's important to highlight the pH of your intimate skin is different and lower to the rest of your other skin so using the clinically approved femfresh Soothing Wash is a great way to care for your intimate skin, especially when its super sensitive when experiencing vulvodynia. As the femfresh Soothing Wash also contains key ingredients aloe vera, cranberry and probiotics, these will work in harmony with your intimate area and offer gentle and effective every-day cleansing. As well as using an intimate skincare product such as femfresh, Dr Frankie would also recommend the following:

- Wear loose cotton underwear and avoid tight clothing which could irritate the skin
- Avoid wearing underwear at night
- Apply soothing cool packs to the area to soothe discomfort
- Focus on reducing general life stress as this can affect the experience of vulvodynia
- Don't avoid sex completely, but instead communicate your concerns to your partner to make it comfortable for you. Some may also benefit from applying a topical local anaesthetic gel to the vulval area about 20 minutes before having sex

- Pelvic floor exercises can help relax the muscles around the vagina and may reduce tension and pain in the area

Dr Frankie encourages women experiencing vulvodynia to speak to their GP about how they may be feeling and even join support networks such as the Vulval Pain Society*.

For more information on vulvodynia or if you would like to request further expert quotes from Dr Frankie Jackson-Spence or samples of the femfresh Soothing Wash, please contact ellie@capsulecomms.com or linda@capsulecomms.com or call 0207 580 4312.

femfresh Soothing Wash - RRP £3.49

Available from Asda, Boots, Superdrug and Sainsbury's *vulvalpainsociety.org
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