



Health Facts with Dr. Max

Published every other Friday in the Springfield
Republican Metro Edition

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Published June 29, 2007

A common problem among couples is that one or both partners may struggle with unspoken concerns that develop from miscommunication and /or misunderstanding. The problem is often compounded by the disappointment that one might feel when a best friend / lover / partner does not live up to expectations. This can lead to building defenses against the very people whom we are supposed to love most. Obviously, the way out of this problem begins with opening the avenues of communication – not always an easy thing to do. In fact, the longer the silence and hurt feelings prevail, the harder it is to open up. If you find yourself in need of developing better communication with your partner, perhaps counseling can help.

At THE COUNSELING & GYNECOLOGY GROUP, our goal is to make a positive difference in our patient's lives. With our practitioner's unique, specialized training we fill a void in the medical community by offering health care services that include counseling, stress and pain management, hypnosis, as well as gynecological care for all ages. We are located at 281 Maple Street, East Longmeadow. Please call us at 413-525-4546 to schedule an appointment.

BTW. One of the many aspects to examine in any relationship is the level of expectation you may have of the other person.

GERITOL?

Published June 15, 2007

One it was common to assume that tiredness was due to "iron poor blood" and that iron supplements was the cure. Actually, very few had true anemia. Worse, excess iron might be stored by the body with deposition in organs with damage to them. This is considered a metal poisoning and is especially likely to happen if the patient is unaware of not processing iron efficiently, a disease called hemochromatosis. This is why manufacturers dropped or reduced the amount of iron in their multi-vitamins. If your iron is low and not due to heavy menses, it might make sense to find out the reason for the anemia before resorting to iron. Is there intestinal bleeding? Is the low blood count due to a B12 deficiency? Self-diagnosis has some danger, as does overdoing iron.

Part of an annual gynecologic exam involves taking a hemoglobin which would hint at anemia. Whether or not a pap smear is needed at that time, an annual examination should still be performed. If our thoughtful approach to your care appeals to you, contact us at The Counseling & Gynecology Group at 413-525-4546. We are located in East Longmeadow at 281 Maple Street.

BTW – The latest in iron therapy has a 3week on, 1 week off pattern to reduce the chances of iron overload. The best approach of all for mild anemia is to eat iron-containing foods.

GOOD QUESTION

Published June 1, 2007

My patient is 25 years old and has been treated for a HPV related abnormality of the cervix. She wonders if it is too late for the new HPV vaccine to protect her. I explain to her that there are approximately 35 types of HPV in the anogenital tract. The vaccine protects against 4 of the better-known types: 6,11,16 and 18. The first 2 cause most genital warts and the last 2 cause 70% of cervical cancer. Only one out of 1000 women have been exposed to all 4 types of HPV in the vaccine so it is virtually impossible not to benefit from most or all of the 4 “protections” that come from this vaccine. All women not yet age 27 should consider this vaccine. The greatest “return on investment” would be to vaccinate teens before sexual debut as they will get it from all 4 “protections” and the immunity seems to extend far into their future.

Reduction of genital warts and cervical cancer can now be achieved by means of a vaccine. This is probably the greatest advance in gynecology of the decade. If you need help deciding whether or not you or your daughter should have the vaccine, or to simply receive the vaccine, call to make an appointment at THE COUNSELING AND GYNECOLOGY GROUP at 413-525-4546. We are located at 218 Maple Street, East Longmeadow.

BTW – The argument that this vaccine will promote promiscuity (by taking away fear of cervical cancer) seems silly. Do teens really factor in the risk of cervical cancer when deciding to be sexual?

Lavada, on the proof we received before it was missing some of the quotations. Please be sure they do that and cap the C & G Group name please.

I'm sending a copy of the proof along with this so you can see where the changes were made.

MOODY?

Published May 15, 2007

Study results regarding hormonal contraception's effects on mood have varied. Some studies even suggest a positive effect, warranting use in the treatment of PMS while other studies hint at an increase in irritability for some. In a recent Australian study, a slightly higher percentage of oral contraceptive non-users reported depressive symptoms compared to oral contraceptive users (30% vs. 23%). The longer the women used the pill, the less depression they reported; this was especially true if they were using the pill for contraception.

Very rarely is a history of depression an absolute contraindication to the use of hormonal contraception (pills, patches, rings). Taking a specific vitamin preparation might open up hormonal contraception to some women who thought they would get depressed. If you feel you would benefit from an individualized approach to your care, contact The Counseling and Gynecology Group at 413-525-4546. We are located in East Longmeadow at 281 Maple Street.

BTW –Usually it is the progestin in hormonal contraception that contributes to depression. One of the newer progestins has been showing great promise in treating PMS and might undergo study as a long-term strategy to improve mood.

RELAXATION

Published May 1, 2007

Regular meditation, with its focus on breathing and concentration, can help you take a peaceful pause from your hectic life. It has been shown to ease physical tension and calm the nervous system – providing relief from mental stress. Here's how you, too, can practice this age-old discipline:

- Sit comfortably either on the floor or in a chair with your head and back straight.
- Begin with a few deep, cleansing breaths.
- Close your eyes and slowly breathe, at your own rhythm, through your nose.
- Aim to focus all your thoughts on your breath – the inhale, the exhale, the sensation, the sound. Don't fret if your mind begins to wander; that's natural for beginners. Just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.
- Start with a 5 to 10 minute daily meditation, then work up to 15 to 20 minutes or more.

Not every stressful situation should result in your taking medication. Learning a relaxation technique will give you a sense of mastery that no pill could ever accomplish. If we can be of help, contact The Counseling and Gynecology Group at 413-525-4546. We are located in East Longmeadow at 281 Maple Street.

BTW – Not unlike what we've learned from natural childbirth breathing exercises, use of this technique will also lower use of pain medication.

MIGRAINES

Published April 17, 2007

Migraine refers to severe head pain with some particular features. The pain commonly occurs only on one side of the head, typically behind the eye or in the temple. The pain is often described as throbbing and may be accompanied by stomach upset and sensitivity to light or sound. Some experience menstrual migraines. These headaches can be prevented by starting an NSAID (such as ibuprofen, or naproxen) a few days before the migraine is expected. Migraines that occur despite this regimen can be treated with a short acting tripan. Avoid the foods you know are triggers. Magnesium supplements have helped some women. Another option is using hormonal birth control methods- the pill, patch, or vaginal ring. By using one of these methods continuously, without a week off for a period, women may avoid the headaches

altogether.

Alternative therapies, including biofeedback and acupuncture might be of help. Our office has had success with some herbal or homeopathic treatments. If we can be of help, contact THE COUNSELING GROUP at 413-525-4546. We are located at 281 Maple Street.

BTW - Not all women with migraines should use hormonal contraception. Check with your neurologist especially if you are a smoker or have migraines with aura.

CANCER PATIENTS

Published April 5, 2007

With cancer diagnoses in the headlines this past week, it is not difficult to imagine that the diagnosis of cancer might trigger a psychological response. Researchers tell us that one in every ten adult patients with cancer display a major psychological reaction. Very few of those affected receive professional help, despite the fact 93 percent indicated that they would be willing to pursue mental health services. Coping with cancer was found to trigger such disorders as depression, anxiety, panic disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, with proper help, these conditions can be effectively addressed.

Psychological responses such as depression can arise following a specific life event, such as the diagnosis of serious illness. If you or a loved one has symptoms of depression, please call THE COUNSELING & GYNECOLOGY GROUP at 413-525-4546 to schedule a consultation. We offer counseling for depression, anxiety, stress, pain management, hypnosis, relaxation techniques, and holistic health care. We are located at 281 Maple Street, East Longmeadow.

P.S. If you are a friend or family member of a cancer patient who shows signs of needing help with psychological ramifications of the disease, suggest that he or she undergo an evaluation.

HORMONE UPDATE

Published March 20, 2007

The benefits of hormone therapy (HT) outweigh its risks in symptomatic but healthy perimenopausal and early-postmenopausal women according to the revised position statement released by the North American Menopause Society. "We have modified our stance on level of risk from 2004...The absolute risk of stroke and heart attack is rare...We have concluded that for the symptomatic woman without a contraindication, the benefits of HT outweigh the risks, and that these women have less cause to fear than the popular perception." Stroke and venous thromboembolism are still small but real risks. Breast cancer associated with HT is also rare, with an actual decrease seen in women taking estrogen alone. HT can be prescribed for prevention of postmenopausal osteoporosis.

A risk: benefit analysis of HT should be reviewed regularly on all patients considering or using HT. Alternatives, including herbal, homeopathic therapy, or bio-identical hormones are also available.

BTW – An unexpected bonus was the finding of a significant reduction in the development of diabetes in women who stayed on HT.

OVERDOING CLEANLINESS

Published March 6, 2007

As many as 80% of women do not follow the advice of most gynecologists not to douche. The older the women, the more likely she is to think (incorrectly) that douching prevents pregnancy and kills germs that cause sexually transmitted diseases. Douching, the flushing of the internal female genitals with a liquid, washes away healthy, protective bacteria and actually renders the lower genital tract more susceptible to infection. It might also push unhealthy bacteria into the uterus. Women should understand that they have a built-in cleaning system that makes it unnecessary to douche. Taking a bath is just as effective and a lot safer. Most obstetricians prohibit douching during pregnancy. Educating patients about optimal health practices is a part of integrating the emotional and physical aspects of healthcare. There are times that vaginal odor, discharge, or itching indicate an infection and should be evaluated in the office.

BTW –

Vinegar douches perhaps have a less deleterious effect on the protective bacteria as compared to the iodine bases products but can still push infection into the uterus and eventually out into the abdomen. If you are advised to douche, it should be carried out under low pressure.

TOO DRY?

Published February 27, 2007

Atrophic vaginitis is the term for inflammation of the vaginal tissue (vaginitis) that occurs as a result of atrophy (deterioration) common in postmenopausal women. As estrogen levels drop, the tissue that lines the vagina becomes thinner and more easily damaged. The top layer of cells is often lost entirely, exposing the layer below, which is more easily traumatized and more vulnerable to inflammation. Vaginal secretions also decline, making intercourse painful. Other symptoms may include vaginal itching, burning, frequent urination, or vaginal discharge. Atrophic vaginitis can be treated topically with estrogen-releasing ring placed in the vagina.

The last 2 do not raise estrogen levels in the blood. Over the counter lubricants help with intercourse. Vitamin E oil might help with the itching and irritation. The condition is less likely to occur in women who experience regular sexual stimulation, which promotes blood flow to the area

BTW:

Women with atrophic vaginitis are also at risk for infectious vaginitis and for sexually transmitted infections.

A NEW TEST

Published February 20, 2007

Currently, the most utilized breast cancer screening technique is mammography. A new modality, Breast Thermography, detects patterns of heat provided by abnormal metabolic activity in precancerous cells. It uses an ultra sensitive infrared camera. Advantage of Thermography:

- Safe, easy and pain free with no radiation exposure or compression of the breast.
- Entire breast can be imaged.
- Differentiates between fibrocystic breast disease and tumors.
- Screens breast with implants.
- Creates opportunities for early intervention.

Thermography does not replace mammography; it adds information to it. However, insurance will not cover this test.

Thermography is best utilized with regular self-exams, annual clinician exams and regular mammography. We might suggest nutritional or lifestyle interventions to address early thermal abnormalities as part of our treating the whole patient.

BTW:

Breast Thermology does not diagnose breast cancer; rather it detects physiological changes in breast tissue. Breast cancer is diagnosed by pathologists' microscopic examination of breast tissue from a biopsy.

TESTING FOR HIV

Published February 13, 2007

If you are considering an HIV test because you fear you've been infected or you're at risk for contracting the virus, there are several options. Testing can be anonymous or confidential and given by your doctor, hospital, public health department, Tapestry Health, Planned Parenthood or other public health clinic. A confidential test means that positive results are reported to your state health department but to no one else without your permission. Your name is recorded with the test in confidential testing. In an anonymous test, your name is not recorded and only you can learn the results. Concerns about future insurability might be an argument in favor of anonymous testing. Choose a testing place where you feel comfortable and know if tests are confidential or anonymous. Counseling before and after testing is highly recommended.

Whether you are a man or a woman, if you have any symptoms or fear of infection of any sexual transmitted disease, your should seek testing as soon as possible.

BTW:

The Massachusetts AIDS Hotline can be reached at 800.235.2331 Monday – Thursday 9AM to 9PM, and Friday 9AM to 7:30PM.

SAD FROM S.A.D?

Published on February 6, 2007

Many of us get into a post holiday slump. However, if you now you haven't bounced back and you find your moods often take a dip in the winter, you might have Season Affective Disorder (SAD). May describe depression, lethargy, fatigue, headache, overeating and irritability; more women than men are affected. The theory that lack of sunlight is a key factor in this depressive disorder. Light therapy has become a key component in the treatment of SAD and special SAD light boxes can be used in the morning. Alternatives include psychotherapy and/or antidepressants.

P.S.

Minimally invasive uterine fibroid embolization provides faster recovery times and shorter stays than surgery for the treatment of fibroids.