OVERVIEW
Sexual dysfunction is when physical or psychological factors interfere with sexual interest, activity, and satisfaction. Sexual dysfunction is common and usually transient, but can have a significant impact on relationships and quality of life. Physical illness such as diabetes or neuropathy, surgery, medication side effects, and injury can interfere with sexual activity. Emotional stress, depression, childbirth, and parenting responsibility also can impact sexual relations. Painful intercourse is most often experienced by women while men are prone to erectile dysfunction.

RELEVANCE FOR MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS
Approximately 70% of patients with MS experience sexual dysfunction at some time but it is rarely discussed during office visits. Sexual dysfunction associated with MS can be divided into three categories.
- Direct result of the disease (genital numbness, decreased sex drive, reduced ability to climax/orgasm)
- Other symptoms of MS (fatigue, bowel and bladder problems, tremors, muscle spasm and pain)
- Emotional factors (fear of rejection, fear of transmitting the disease, decreased confidence)

Knowing the type of dysfunction is the first step in addressing the problem. Fill out the following checklist and bring it to your next appointment to help the discussion with your provider.

ABOUT YOU
Over the past 6 months, which of the following symptoms have interfered with your sexual activity or satisfaction? (check all that apply)

- Muscle tightness or spasms in my arms, legs or body
- Bladder or urinary symptoms
- Bowel symptoms
- Feelings of dependency because of MS
- Tremors or shaking in my hands or body
- Pain, burning or discomfort in my body
- Feeling that my body is less attractive
- Problems moving my body the way I want during sexual activity
- Feeling less feminine due to MS
- Problems with concentration, memory or thinking
- Exacerbation or significant worsening of my MS
- Less feeling or numbness in the genitals
- Fear of being rejected sexually due to MS
- Worries about sexually satisfying my partner
- Feeling less confident about my sexuality due to MS
- Lack of sexual interest or desire
- Less intense or pleasurable orgasms or climaxes
- Takes too long to orgasm or climax
- Inadequate vaginal wetness or lubrication

RESOURCES
National MS Society: http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Symptoms-Diagnosis/MS-Symptoms/Sexual-Dysfunction
US Department of Veterans Affairs: http://www.va.gov/MS/Veterans/symptom_management/Sexual_Dysfunction_and_Multiple_Sclerosis.asp

www.cmeAIMS.org