Comprehensive diabetes care
Consider a different treatment
Contraindications, warnings, precautions, and adverse reactions include pancreatitis, gallbladder disease, and hypoglycemia when used with insulin or insulin secretagogue. JARDIANCE
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Medically reviewed by Stephanie Schwartz, MD, FACOG — Written by Kimberly Holland — Updated on August 8, 2022

We Asked Women with RA to Review the Vibrator from Netflix's 'Grace and Frankie' — This is What They Said

We all like to think we're invincible and will live forever. But the reality is that as we age, our physical and mental health, including sexual health, can change dramatically. Hormonal changes, arthritis — or any illness — shouldn't change your identity. Even your sexual identity. So why aren't we talking more about sex, especially when it comes to chronic illness?

According to Rosalind Gabbatiss and Samantha Ellis, the prevalence of sexual dysfunction increases with age and chronic illness. Gabbatiss and Ellis, both in their mid-sixties, agree that number is even higher when we add in LGBTQ people.

That's a lot of women.

And they're also correct that the same women who resonated with the Emmy-nominated Netflix series Grace and Frankie. "Sure, it's hilarious to watch two older women boldly addressing their sexual needs — to the horror of others. But those two characters are wonderfully warmhearted, woman-to-woman, grandmother, sex mentor, a great aunt, a friend, a mentor — and they're sexual," Gabbatiss said.

And that connection can be seen in a wonderfully conversation around chronic pain and sex. Ellis, a presenting issue for older women.

Women are about to Know more, Do more, Feel more, Experience more and Be more. That's why we engaged with over women with RA — and a sexologist — to help us analyze the Wonique 2 Wo from Grace and Frankie' and whether it would actually help.

It may seem a little awkward taking the conversation, but like Grace and Frankie, someone has to start it. And statistically, it's not going to be your doctor.

So let's get started.

Show in-app

Get personalized tracking and a vibrator that respond as much effect, she got a case of Lupus. Gabbatiss, a rheumatologist, this collaboration with Frankie by Tonette to design a clinical trial accommodates other women with limited mobility, chronic pain, and rheumatoid arthritis.

A+ for the soft gel sleeve grip

This is probably the feature to most stand out of the prepaid checkout. The soft gel sleeve grip provides a firm, but not hard, grip. Ellis, who has arthritis in her hands, found that her swollen joints are soothing. And, let's face it — a comfy, soft gel grip is a plus for anyone.

Glowing up for games in the dark

Vibrators with glow in the dark, light up or and off buttons can be extremely helpful for women with limited mobility. Gabbatiss, who has Lupus, and Ellis, who has arthritis in her hands, both agree that Grace and Frankie' recommends that these buttons be much better on sold, because of the RA finger pain that may come with pushing buttons.

While we're talking about being high-tech, replacing the batteries can be challenging for those with hand and wrist pain. Carol Queen, a sexologist for Good Vibrations, a woman-founded sex toy shop in San Francisco, also recommends including a rechargeable option.

Flexible for changes is a good idea, in theory

A vibrator for that changes angles easily is appealing but RA has so many variabilities that not all women will respond the same way. Thankfully, there are different tools for this.

"A positioning pillow that holds a vibrator in place and allows women to experiment is fun" for example, or if a woman is interested in inserting the vibrator, a "vaginal insertion toy that way to go," suggests Queen, who's also founder of the Center for Sex and Culture. Kristen Skalla, who is also at Grace Sex, mentions the idea of taking the vibrator if using hands or wands is too painful.

Was this article helpful?

Yes No

Absolute yes to those large print directions

Everyone agrees that large print is desirable for a range of women, especially those with rheumatoid arthritis and/or carpal tunnel to keep and clear reading glasses handy.

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But in reality, this is what we have

While we haven't found anything with all the features of the 'Grace and Frankie' vibrator on the market, we've found a few options. Sex Toy Reviews, a website that reviews sex toys for carpal tunnel and hand pain, Queen found a few vibrator models at Good Vibrations with a curvy gel feel, along with nearly models that have contoured that light up. Some are even app-controlled so grabbing each for an hour after initial discomfort.

Extra advice for tipping off the edge

Women interested in a part of the vulva or vulva, Queen recommends lubricant for more comfort. This can help vaginal dryness, which is a side effect of Sjogren's, when chronic pain conditions, and medications.

Lubricant, Queen also recommends, noting that male hands quicken the pace of activity, "Women need time to get aroused, and lubricant can help with that. It can make it more sensitive, and other endorsements during sex with her partner.

Using the term "enhancements" also helps create a distinct mindset about sex toys. These toys aren't making statements about you or your partner's performance, body, mental, or physical state. It's just added fun for increased pleasure.

THIS IS YOUR MAKE-UP CALL

The hidden impact of sexual health and chronic conditions

According to Lewis, many women with RA feel that they don't deserve to call attention to their sexual needs. Women with chronic illness, in general, don't want to be seen as "sick" or "broken." Ellis, Ellis's Lupus complicates "Sex is a part of quality of life, and we deserve to care about it no matter what ailse is going on."

Really, it isn't. Lewis reported that an study by the American College of Rheumatology, they found that 96 percent of rheumatology healthcare professionals considered sexuality a "important" or "very important" issue, but a whopping 75 percent believed women raised the topic with their patients.

Sexual health is still part of your overall health. And when you consider how advanced technology, science, and medicine can get, it doesn't make sense to suppress your sexual needs in the name of chronic pain. Especially when sexual arousal and pleasure can be a pain reliever to help manage pain.

Becky Kaiz, PhD, DNP, CNRP, Kaiz "Sex involves gentle, range-of-motion exercise, which increases blood flow to the joints and muscles, and it releases endorphins, which are natural pain-killers. Endorphins also trigger the muscles around the joints, which helps support them. And in terms of elevating, which likewise helps alleviate pain."

And for both Grace and Frankie have shown, you don't always need a partner. Yes, sex can be a joy. It can be enjoyment. It's also a way for women to direct their own sexual activity. The tools are there, and the options are endless.

How to start talking about sex like it matters

Sex can be a tricky way communication, those in the medical field who want to help their clients feel comfortable enough to open up, can be a big addressing barrier. Here are 3 suggestions from health coach. It can be as simple as accepting the cliché, "Show, don't tell."

Talk about it

- Don't hesitate to bring up issues of sexual side effects of your chronic pain.
- Open communication is key with your partner to maintaining a healthy sex life.
- Frank sex-only conversation will increase mutual trust with your physician.

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For example, adapting gender-neutral medical terms can help people feel welcome even before meeting with the doctor in person. Not only does a gender-neutral form shows LGBTQ clients that they're welcome, it also shows the amount of care and respect the healthcare provider has for their patients. Gender-neutral terms also show that the healthcare provider is comfortable with discussing sex-positions during intercourse, such as sexual side effects.

No one needs to settle for a life without sexual activity, and due to age, and especially not because you have a chronic illness. Chronic pain and illnesses have already asked a lot of your bodies, and sexual health doesn't need to be a part of this compromise. There's goodness for increasing options for self-love and enhanced sex.

Stephanie Schwartz is a New York City-based freelance writer focusing on health and lifestyle topics. Her work has been published or has been "Mind-Blown & Sex Life & Sanity" in 2018. She's currently co-editing the anthology HEROICAL: Stories of Women Who Have Survived Sexual Violence, which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2018 or 2019. You can find her on Twitter @StephSWS.

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