

# Sin PENA

5 EMBARRASSING SEX HEALTH QUESTIONS: ANSWERED!

BY CELIA SHATZMAN

■ **AFRAID TO SPEAK UP** about sex and personal hygiene at the doctor's office? You're not alone. "We just weren't raised to talk about these issues, especially in the Hispanic community," says Nancy Aguirre de Baker, M.D., a Mexican American ob-gyn at Fort Health-Care Center for Women's Health in Fort Atkinson, Wis. Here are some of the questions Latinas often feel shy about bringing up.



## 1//IS IT WEIRD IF I SMELL DOWN THERE?

"The vagina has a way of self-cleaning, and some vaginal odors and discharge are actually very normal," Dr. Aguirre de Baker says. Discharge can range from clear to a tan color, odorless or musky. But if the scent becomes particularly strong or you notice a change in discharge, that could be a sign of infection, so see a doctor.

## 2//WHY CAN'T I REACH ORGASM?

Don't panic—you probably just haven't found what arouses you yet, so try experimenting more. "And don't

expect your partner to read your mind," says Dr. Aguirre de Baker. "Tell him—or better yet, show him—what you like." However, if it persists, it could be a sign of a more chronic psychological issue, like anhedonia, which is when we no longer feel pleasure from activities we usually enjoy.

## 3//WILL MY BREASTS BE NORMAL AFTER I HAVE A BABY?

"The size tends to increase, and one side may increase more than the other—it's very rare for women to be exactly symmetrical," Dr. Aguirre de Baker says. "Typi-

cally they go back to normal after breastfeeding ends; it happens faster for women who do not breastfeed." Darkening skin tone is also common, especially in areas that are already more pigmented, such as the nipples, genitals, underarms and inner thighs. This tends to fade within a few months.

## 4//I'M HAVING PAIN DURING INTERCOURSE. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Vaginal dryness or an uncomfortable position is typically the culprit—Dr. Aguirre de Baker recommends a

water-based lubricant—but pain isn't normal, and if it continues to be a problem, ask your doctor to diagnose the cause. It could possibly be an infection or skin disorder, or a condition such as vaginismus (involuntary spasms), endometriosis, scarring from surgery, uterine prolapse, uterine fibroids and/or large ovarian cysts. It could also be a sign of stress, anxiety, depression, concerns about your physical appearance, history of sexual abuse, fear of intimacy or relationship problems.

## 5//HOW OFTEN DO PEOPLE TYPICALLY HAVE SEX?

"Everybody is different," Dr. Aguirre de Baker says. "Normal is whatever feels comfortable for you and your partner." And that usually slows down over time, she says. In many cases, a lowered libido—a problem both men and women experience—is due to stress or a change in medication or diet; a physical problem is rarely the cause. However, it's best to rule out physical causes at your annual exam with your ob-gyn.