

Tips for Talking with Your OB/GYN



ABOUT *the* DOCTOR



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An OB/GYN is a physician who specializes in the care of women of all ages. They provide a wide range of services, including:

- Screenings, such as pelvic exams
- Postmenopausal care
- Treatment of benign breast disease
- Help for vaginal dryness and vulvar or pelvic pain
- Surgery, including hysterectomy and minimally invasive techniques

While OB/GYNs are specialists, many women choose them as their primary care physicians. In fact, according to a recent article in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Practice*, OB/GYNs spend, on average, almost half of their time providing primary care services.

Dr. Morgan adds that when you see your OB/GYN, it's important to share information about the following:

- Unusual symptoms — such as nipple discharge, genital itching, painful urination, or severe pelvic pain — including when they started and what, if anything, triggers them
- Your sexual habits
- What medicines you take
- Any other health care specialists you see ■

Doctors sometimes seem to talk a language all their own. But to communicate with yours, you don't have to learn "doctor-speak."

As Steven Morgan, M.D., FACOG, a board certified OB/GYN at Jersey Shore University Medical Center, explains, "Just try to be as clear and honest as you can. And don't be concerned about bringing up embarrassing topics — your doctor discusses sensitive issues every day. You want a doctor who listens to you and talks to you in a two-way dialogue."

RETHINKING BLACK COHOSH FOR MENOPAUSE

If you're thinking about trying the herb black cohosh to get you through menopause, you may want to think again. In a recent one-year study of more than 350 women, black cohosh helped ease hot flashes and night sweats about as much as taking nothing at all.

The women, ages 45 to 55, averaged four to five hot flashes a day and one or two night sweats. The study compared several therapies, including black cohosh alone and in combination with other herbs; hormone replacement therapy (HRT); and a placebo.

The result: Only HRT caused a significant drop in the number of hot flashes and night sweats. Black cohosh was as ineffective as the placebo. But HRT carries other health risks. So, you should consider it only after a thorough discussion with your doctor.

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