

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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The hymen is named after *Hymenaeus*, the Greek god of marriage and weddings.

Q My longtime girlfriend and I have been trying to have sex for the past two years. We have tried 3 times in total. She is on the pill and I wear a condom. We do a lot of foreplay and I have tried making her orgasm before penetration. Still, it is painful for her, even after using almost an entire bottle of lubrication and hours of trying to relax. She explains the pain as a burning pain at the entrance. She has gone to her doctor, and even considered surgery to tear her hymen. Her doctor told her that it will take time and effort, but does not suggest surgery. Clearly, everything her doctor has suggested from experimenting and masturbation has not helped her. It hurts me to see her in so much pain and I want to share intimacy with her. Any suggestions for us?

A. Yes! See another doctor for a 2nd opinion.

You are obviously a very caring partner and have tried all the things that make sense: relaxation, foreplay, additional lubrication, and gentle entry. Your girlfriend can schedule a visit with a gynecologist to have another exam to determine what is causing the pain associated with your attempts at sex.

Sometimes, the hymen – the thin membrane that partially covers the opening of the vagina – can be thicker than average. For many women, the hymen (which is present at birth) is naturally perforated, or eventually “tears open” through tampon use, vigorous exercise, or stretching by insertion of fingers.

It is important that your girlfriend have an exam to rule out any health condition that the first doctor didn't identify. After the new exam, she and the doctor will discuss what options are available. If they both agree, a doctor can perform a “hymenectomy” to tear the tissue that is making penetration painful and, it seems, impossible.

If your girlfriend is a student, she can be seen by our board-certified, female gynecologist at Campus Health. Or, our referral office can suggest a provider in the community. Just call (520) 621-9202 for an appointment.



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

SexTalk is written by Lee Ann Hamilton, M.A., CHES, David Salafsky, MPH, and Carrie Hardesty, BS, CHES, health educators at The UA Campus Health Service.