# Denise Asks Awkward Questions – Sex? I prefer sudoku

**Denise:** Hello everybody. I'm comedian Denise Scott and welcome to Denise Asks Awkward Questions with Jean Hailes. Today's guest is the clinical director of Jean Hailes, Dr. Liz Farrell. She has qualifications I can't even pronounce, but let's just say she is brilliant. And she has been a world leader in women's health for over 40 years. All right, it's time to get awkward!

All right, Sophie from The Barossa in South Australia writes, "I'm 65 and I've been having an affair for the last two years. A friend said I should be using condoms and get an SDI check, but surely not at my age. I don't even know how to use condoms and I can't fall pregnant."

What do you think, Liz?

**Liz:** Well, her friend is absolutely correct. And this is a big issue for the baby boomers because in fact, condoms were for contraception in the sixties and seventies, and it was to avoid pregnancy. But STIs were not as common and as prominent as they are now. And what we are now seeing, because of the lack of use of condoms in postmenopausal women having new relationships, is that we are seeing an increase in herpes, we're seeing an increase in chlamydia, and we are seeing an increase in abnormal pap smears with human papillomavirus, HPV. Which causes cervical cancer.

So the answer to Sophie is, if it's not on, it's not on.

**Denise:** And this is something that, you know, a friend of mine who decided to go back to having sex after not having had it for like 30 years or more, could not be convinced about STIs.

**Liz:** Well, she's...

**Denise:** And took such risks.

**Liz:** She's crazy. What she does need to do is to go and have that STI check that Sophie's friend said she's gotta go and do. So she should make sure she's had a pap smear, make sure she's had a, a vaginal swab, a cervical swab, a swab of the neck of the womb for chlamydia and gonorrhea.

**Denise:** I'll deliver that news to her. And a packet of condoms.

**Liz:** Yes.

**Denise:** As a gift.

Ellie from Albany in West Australia writes, "I've hit 55 and I would rather have dental surgery than sex. Where has my libido gone?"

**Liz:** Well, that's terrible. Having dental, rather have the... go to the dentist than having sex.

**Denise:** Oh, Liz, I've gotta confess, I prefer Sudoku. To sex.

**Liz:** Oh dear.

**Denise:** I know

**Liz:** so...

**Denise:** Help, Liz help.

**Liz:** Okay. When you get to the menopause and we've got this hormone change, women's vaginas can go dry and also skin loses its collagen. So you either shrink or sag, which is a bit sad. And what happens is if the tissues shrink, then the vaginal entrance can get smaller. And so you're not gonna have a libido if sex hurts. Either use a lubricant to start with, but that's not gonna help if the vaginal entrance is a bit narrower. So you need to speak to your GP.

But hormones are actually right down the bottom of the list of causes of loss of libido, and we're talking about sexual desire. A lot of women, if they've had a partner for many years, sex can get prescriptive. In other words, have sex the same way every time. It's a bit boring. It might be that there's difficulties in the relationship, so why should you have a libido if you don't like the person you're living with? If you've got massive amounts of stress at the time, and most of us around the menopausal years have either career issues, children issues, if you've had children relationship issues, financial issues in this day and age, and you know, we're going through a pandemic. So there are all these life stresses going on. So that's one thing.

Now, I always tell women to read Dr. Rosie King's books, 'Where Has My Libido Gone?' and she's also got another book called 'Good Loving Good Sex'. I was at a lecture that she gave once and she said, there's this hump of reluctance. So you draw this big hump. And the only way you get over the hump of reluctance is that you are willing to participate in oodles of foreplay so that you start to become aroused. So the arousal starts and it's on the up. What then happens to women is they think about what they're gonna do tomorrow, or they think about what's on the shopping list.

So what you then have to do is, push those thoughts out of your head. Allow the arousal to go on a bit more, and then the same thing will happen again. So if you can imagine a graph that goes a big hump, and then it goes up a little bit, then it drops down because you think about the shopping list, then it goes up because you think about what clothes you're gonna wear tomorrow and have you done the washing, and then it goes up because you're getting up there, you're getting higher and higher, and then suddenly you think about, oh my God, I've, I've had a text message from somebody that I haven't answered. And you've gotta push that out of your head. And then eventually you may get to orgasm.

**Denise:** All right, that's it for today. If I'm not here and you have more questions, go to jeanhailes.org.au. Bye everybody.

Information about Jean Hailes for Women’s Health

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health of all women, girls and gender-diverse people. For free, evidence-based and easy-to-understand health information, visit [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au).

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