

Deal Breakers?: Dealing with body hair and disclosing STDs

Dear Spyce,

So I recently met this man who's pretty wonderful. We have so much in common, share the same goals, and I even like his friends. The sex is amazing and I *am* attracted to him but ... he's super hairy! This isn't something that I've experienced before and it's not something I feel particularly jazzed about. I don't know ... will I be able to get over dating such a hairy guy, or can I ask him to shave to give our love a chance?

Not Feelin the Fur

Dear NFF,

First off, congrats on finding someone who checks so many of your boxes. Sounds like the important things are there. And while you're not used to being intimate with such a furry fellow, if you are attracted to him despite the hair, I'd ask you to take a deeper look at what actually lies behind your distaste. Does his hairiness remind you of something or someone unpleasant? Does he not feel the way you think someone should feel? There might be some underlying societal or cultural conditioning that could be getting in the way of you enjoying the connection that you have with this man.

While I wouldn't say that asking him to change a certain part of his body for you is really fair, there are, however, ways to approach it, and the best one is with simple curiosity. Instead of telling him that you hate his hair, ask him how he feels about it. Listen to his stories about being a hairy guy, find out if he has ever waxed and how that went for him. He might be wearing his hair as a badge of honor, or he might be willing to try something new. But frame it in a way that it's not shaming him for being who he is, and for something that he can't change.

And while you can't force yourself to be excited about something that you're not, you can try to overlook it. Because if you like him in so many other ways, perhaps his hair can "grow on you."

Dear Spyce,

I recently was diagnosed with genital herpes and now I am freaking out! I became single this past year after being in a long and sexless by the end relationship, and I slept with more than the usual share of people once it ended. And now I feel really awful!

For one thing, getting an STD feels like proof that I must be a bad person for having all this casual sex, and then there's the logistics of this new situation! Do I have to tell everyone that I sleep with from now on that I have it? Can't I ever get rid of it? Am I doomed for life?

Signed,

The Scarlet Harlot

Dear Scarlet,

Well first off, I am NOT going to call you a harlot because you definitely do not have to identify that way for pursuing pleasure and exploring your sexuality. That, my dear, is a human right, and you are totally justified in doing so. It sounds like you may have gone for a long time without feeling desired, and it's natural to want to have intimacy after a long dry spell! As long as it's safe, sane and consensual, no one has anything to feel bad about!

Unfortunately, it sounds like you may not have had enough info on how to keep yourself safe during these times, but please don't beat yourself up about it! Herpes is a very common STI, with close to 67% of the US population having HSV1, and 11% having HSV2, and while they have different numbers, they are essentially the same virus in different places. And the one on your mouth, aka cold sores, are often not even transmitted sexually! Also, it's often asymptomatic so many people don't even know that they have it, and many doctors don't test for it in a regular STD panel unless you ask for it, so it really can be a silent sexual stalker. So please, don't feel too bad about joining the ranks of the many!

In terms of moving forward, while you can't actually be rid of it, there are medications that can be taken for an outbreak, and also regularly in order to keep things at bay. And while things won't necessarily go back to "business as usual," that might actually be a good thing.

Having the "safe sex talk" before each new interaction is important, and can not only keep you safe physically, but can help out on the emotional side as well!

There is so much one can say about this topic, so please contact me personally if you'd like more info. And be well! You're still an awesome person!

Spyce