

It's time to talk to grandpa about sex, because chances are, his doctor isn't

Survey finds majority of Halton Hills seniors not talking to doctor about sexual health

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It gives a whole new meaning to needing better bedside manner.

The Independent Free Press (IFP) has conducted a survey of seniors in Halton Hills and found that 90 per cent of respondents had not spoken to their doctor about their sexual health and practicing safe sex.

In a world of Viagra and online dating, seniors have more opportunity to engage in amorous activity later on into life, but with that pleasure comes some pitfalls.

Seniors are getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

In 2016, Halton public health reported over 1,896 incidents of chlamydia across the region and 262 incidents of gonorrhoea.

While the rates are nowhere near their millennial counterparts, a small percentage of men over 60 and over 70 reported testing positive for gonorrhoea, as well as a small percentage of men between 60-69 as

having chlamydia.

The numbers in Halton don't point to an imminent crisis. Georgetown doctor and Ontario Medical Association president Nadia Alam says that seniors are getting STIs, and it's an issue that doctors need to be cognoscente of.

"Doctors have to remember to ask about safe sex practices," said Alam, explaining that medical professionals need to remember that seniors are sexually active, and also fight the embarrassment of broaching the subject.

"Family members have to remember to ask about safe sex practices," she said, "even though, for a kid, a son or a daughter, to ask their senior parent about safe sex practices can feel very awkward."

She recommends broaching the subject when an older family member is starting a new relationship.

"It is tricky," she admits, recalling one patient she has, whose elderly mother had just started dating again. The



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

Georgetown Doctor Nadia Alam says physicians need to be speaking to their elderly patients about safe sex.

daughter bought a box of condoms as a gift, as a way of saying she supports her mom, respects her freedom and wanted her to

be safe.

"I thought that was a really good way of approaching it," said Alam.

The physician stresses the importance of breaking down these barriers and opening up a dialogue about safe sex with seniors.

Barbara Marshall, professor of sociology and women's studies at Trent University says that there are many inaccurate stereotypes about seniors' sexuality.

"The rise in STIs has been a pretty widely noted issue," said Marshall, who specializes in research on aging and sexuality, explaining that there's a number of factors at play.

"People are living longer," said Marshall. "we're seeing a lot more people re-partnering later on in life as a result of marriage breakdowns, as a result of widowhood."

She says that to look at peo-

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INVITATION TO SUBMIT AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AS TO THE AVAILABILITY OF SPACE FOR LEASE IN GEORGETOWN, ONTARIO FILE NUMBER: 81000491

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