

Barb DePree wanted a tasteful online resource where women could go to find medically accurate information.

Talking about sex

Dr. Barb DePree was surprised to discover that many middle-aged women aren't enjoying sex.

The 51-year old physician has been a gynecologist for more than 20 years, most recently helping women manage menopause as head of the Women's Midlife Services at Holland Hospital.

As part of the hospital's intake process, women fill out a questionnaire with eight questions about sexual health. "I was quite overwhelmed at the amount of dissatisfaction reported by women," DePree said. "And truly alarmed at what that meant for long-term relationships when women step away from sex."

Responses included everything from "uninterested" to "uncomfortable."

DePree's solution was to launch MiddlesexMD, a website aimed at women ages 40 to 65 with concerns about sex.

She wanted a tasteful online resource where women could go to find medically accurate information. They can ask questions, buy products and read blogs, including "five things we believe a woman needs to enjoy sex after menopause."

By its nature, DePree said, sex is not an easy conversation. Only 17 percent of patients who go to physicians are asked about sexual concerns, she said. "So most women don't talk about it. Not just the 65-year-old women: We've heard from 45-year-olds who haven't had intercourse in over a year."

MiddlesexMD gives women the information to know how to start a discussion.

"We wanted to introduce platforms for women to say, 'Hey, come and read this.' They can engage their partner into exploring solutions together."

— MARTY PRIMEAU

