

SMSNA PATIENTS

## How Often Do People Delay or Forgo Treatment for Kink-Related Injuries?



Providers

Patients

Patients Tags no conditions

Kink and BDSM (bondage-discipline, dominance-submission, and/or sadism-masochism) are often used to describe a broad range of unconventional sexual activities such as rough sex, bondage, role-playing, and fetish experimentation.

Several studies have indicated that kink-related fantasies are fairly prevalent in the general population and that participation in BDSM sexual activities is more common than one might expect. For example, one study of 1,516 participants in Quebec revealed that 47% of the women and 60% of the men fantasized about sexually dominating someone else, and 52% of the women and 46% of the men had fantasies about being tied up by a sexual partner. Additionally, a study of 1,027 Belgian participants showed that almost half of the respondents (47%) had participated in a BDSM-related activity at least once in their lifetime.

Still, kink is not widely understood, and many kink-involved individuals may experience or perceive stigma when disclosing their sexual practices to others. The anticipation of stigma is one reason why individuals may choose not to tell their health care provider(s) about their kink-related behaviors, even if they may impact their health. (Engaging in consensual kink can be supportive of positive health outcomes, but kink-involved people may also be at higher risk for injury or medical complications due to the behaviors).

The authors of a recent *Journal of Sexual Medicine* study took these factors into consideration when they designed the 2016 Kink Health Survey, which was the first survey. Participants were recruited through Facebook and FetLife (a social media platform for people with kink-related attitudes or behaviors) and asked to complete an anonymous survey about their personal characteristics (age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.) and healthcare experiences. In the end, 1,398 kink-involved and kink-identified participants were included in the analysis.

Many of the participants did not disclose their kink behavior or identity to their physical healthcare clinician (58%) or their mental healthcare provider/therapist (50%). Fourteen percent of the participants reported experiencing a kink-related injury at some point in their life, with kink-related injury being defined as "something that occurred during a scene or as a result of a scene that caused you to consider medical attention or caused you to miss work." Of those who had experienced a kink-related injury, 19% reported delaying or avoiding healthcare for their injury.

These findings suggest that some individuals who participate in consensual kink or BDSM may be reluctant to seek medical attention for injuries that occur as a result of these practices. Sexual medicine specialists and other health care professionals who are knowledgeable about kink (and aware of the difference between consensual BDSM and abuse) may be a good resource for those who require medical assistance but worry about facing stigma or discrimination for disclosing their sexual practices.

### Resources:

Sprott, R.A., Randall, A., Smith, K., Woo, L. (2021). Rates of Injury and Healthcare Utilization for Kink-Identified Patients. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 18(10), 1721-1734. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2021.08.001>.