

When To Break Up With Your Gynecologist

by Jennifer Donnell

He asked what I used for birth control and I told him, “prayer”. He smiled the kind of smile you smile at young girls who don't know any better. It was his first year as a doctor and he took the time to sit down and have real conversations. Once his practice became busy, this would be a thing of the past. The main reason he was the talk of the town, was that he was incredibly handsome- epitomizing the good looks of a cartoon hero. His brown hair flowed gently across his forehead, as if rivaling a shampoo commercial. His brown eyes and smile lit up the gynecologist's office, even better than the fluorescent lighting. The women in the waiting room, once they began talking, all believed he could have been a model. His father was a well known doctor, his brother a dentist, and one could almost see a halo of family money floating about his head.

However, I wasn't at his office to discuss my inability to convince my boyfriend to use condoms. Rather, it was the strange blemish I'd discovered on my bikini-line. I told him about it, immediately. “I think I have....” and I listed a few worrying potential diagnoses, all featured that month in my favorite magazine. He asked me to lie back. I did and he pulled my paper gown agape. “It's not..” he reiterated my top contenders, explaining, “It's simply an ingrown hair.”

Though relieved, my heart beat like my rabbit's whenever I took him out of his cage. *Thump, thump, thump*. An ingrown hair made sense. My boyfriend preferred women who were cleanly shaven and I'd been fanatically grooming myself since we first took the plunge. I breathed in relief, but my residual nervous energy exhaled it out in an unladylike chortle.

The doctor took off his gloves and shook my hand. My hand was cold and his mouth lifted at the corners, as if amused by my youthful nervousness. He had me promise to use birth control in future. I nodded that I would.

This wasn't our last acquaintance. I'd visit him yearly for checkups, more frequently once I began having a family. I never enjoyed it- the paper robe and manual exam, the increasingly long wait as he became one of the most popular doctors in the practice. He began wearing glasses and grew a few gray hairs. My sister began going to him, too, and mentioned that he goes extreme skiing, when he isn't working.

Last year, at my yearly exam, I mentioned I was nervous and he said, "Well, that's just how you are. You're a nervous person."

Had anyone else said it, I would have been offended... but he happened to be palming my breasts and I felt submissive to his authority. I explained that I'm not normally nervous, I just don't enjoy gynecological visits or doctors in general. He smiled, just like he did when I was a young woman worried that one ingrown hair was an STD.

"Your hair looks nice dark." he complimented, when he was finished, removing his non-latex gloves with a snap. I gingerly brushed my hair away from my eyes and left.

This year, I was more nervous than ever. It was probably due to my increasingly diminished sex life. The only time I'm naked is when I climb out of the shower and that's between myself and God.

I began trembling, my teeth began chattering. My heart sped up as if I was climbing ten flights of stairs. The nurse assured that she's the same way, but I wasn't sure I believed her. She had me change

into the loathed paper robe, saying the doctor would be in, “shortly”.

Ten minutes went by, then twenty. I waddled over to the door and peaked outside, hugging my paper robe tight, trying not to expose myself to the staff. I called out, meekly, “Can I please have a glass of water?”

My doctor happened to be standing with one of the nurses and smiled his standard smile, like he knew I was freaking out. I waited ten more minutes, trying to calm myself down, wondering if I was likely to perish from sheer misdirected terror. I contemplated getting dressed and leaving the office, but knew that would be awkward. Finally, forty five minutes since I'd put on the crinkly paper robe, he walked in.

“That way your hands don't get cold!” he joked, referencing my gloved arm warmers, but I was hardly in the mood to smile. He asked how I was doing and I surmised my oldest son's psychiatric diagnosis and the trouble with his school.

“And how are you doing?” I asked, as he put on one glove, then the second, not wanting to monopolize the conversation.

“Oh, I'm doing absolutely *fabulous*. Life is amazing!” he exclaimed, likely reflecting on the winter season, his love of skiing, and how the wind will blow his aging model hair when he hits uncharted slopes. “What are you doing for birth control?” he continued, my chart in his hand, pen ready.

“Condoms...” I replied, then added, for truthful humor, “...and abstinence.”

“Abstinence?” he seemed less pleased by this than I'd hoped, “You need to make time for intimacy, it's important.”

I imagined his wife, as she looked when he was a young doctor and met patients in his office, before sending them into the exam rooms. Back then, she was blonde and very much the epitome of our upper middle class suburban town. *My doctor has a better sex life than me*, I thought, silently.

He asked me to lie back and scoot down, “further, further...”, then slid his gloved hand inside of me. “Everything feels great!” he remarked, then had me to raise my arms above my head. He palmed my right breast, then my left. I wondered if he remembered my perky tits of yore and how breastfeeding changed them. Soon, it was over and he left without complimenting my hair.

On the drive home, I wondered if it's time to change gynecologists or if I'd ultimately despise the experience regardless. What if I found a crotchety old gynecologist, who didn't care that I'm nervous or notice when I change my hair. I would just go in for the line up and not have to wait 45 minutes in a waiting room full of perfectly manicured, yuppie vaginas waiting to be medically excavated. Then, maybe I could relax.

