

Concerns about having sex?

It's common for people to have problems with sex as a result of cancer and its treatment. Sexual problems can last longer than other side effects of cancer treatment. In spite of this, you can still have an intimate relationship finding new ways to be close if sex is not right at the moment. It's important to seek help in learning how to adapt to these changes. Until then, you and your partner may benefit from other ways to show you care about each other. This can include touching, holding, hugging, and cuddling.

Talking to your partner and sharing your feelings and concerns is very important. They may be afraid to have sex with you. Or your partner may be worried about hurting you or think that you're not feeling well. Even for couples that have been together a long time, it can be hard to stay connected. Let your partner know if you want to have sex or would rather be intimate in other ways such as touch, hugs, kissing, and cuddling.

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- [American Cancer Society. Cancer, Sex, Female Body](#)
- [American Cancer Society. Cancer, Sex Male Body](#)
- [Cancer.Net. Dating and Intimacy](#)
- [Cancer.Net. Sexuality and Cancer Treatment: Men](#)
- [Cancer.Net. Sexuality and Cancer Treatment: Women](#)
- [NIH, NCI. Self-Image and Sexuality](#)
- [Chemocare. Sexuality and Chemotherapy](#)
- [CancerCare.org. Intimacy During and After Cancer Treatment](#)

Finding Ways to Be Physically Intimate

- Erection problems. Medicine, assistive devices, counseling, surgery, or other approaches.
- Vaginal dryness. Ask your health care provider about options such as using a water-based lubricant during sex, applying a vaginal moisturizer to rehydrate the area, using vaginal dilators to increase flexibility and comfort, and/or taking hormones/using a hormone cream are options.
- Muscle weakness. You can strengthen muscles in your genital area through Kegel exercises. Another alternative is to see a physical therapist who is trained to evaluate patients for pelvic floor issues and can provide pelvic floor physical therapy to address the problem.
- Talking with a counselor or psychologist. Some people find that sexual problems related to cancer can affect their self-esteem or start to strain their relationship with their partner. If this is the case, ask your physician, nurse or social worker if you can talk to a therapist. Talking to a professional alone, or with your partner, may help.
- Seeing a specialist. A sex therapist may be able to help you talk openly about your problems, work through your concerns, and find new ways to help you and your partner re-establish intimacy.

Feeling Intimate after Treatment

Although cancer treatment may be over, sexual problems may remain for a while.

- Be proud of your body. It got you through treatment!
- Give yourself time to recovery, physically and emotionally.
- Think of things that help you feel more attractive and confident.
- Focus on the positive. Try to be aware of your thoughts, since they can affect your sex life.
- Be open to change. You may find new ways to enjoy intimacy.

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer. Problemas de salud sexual en mujeres con cáncer](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer. Problemas de salud sexual en hombres con cáncer](#)
- [Cancer.Net. Sexualidad y tratamiento contra el cáncer: mujeres](#)
- [Cancer.Net. Sexualidad y tratamiento contra el cáncer: hombres](#)
- [Chemocare. Sexualidad](#)
- [American Cancer Society. Cómo el cáncer afecta la sexualidad](#)