

Finding Support for Sexual and Reproductive Concerns

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People with cancer almost always have concerns about intimacy and sexuality. In addition, younger patients often have questions about fertility and reproductive health. You should expect that having cancer and going through treatment is very likely to affect your relationships, and it may seem difficult to address these issues with your doctors. Be reassured that time will help, and that talking with your partner during and after treatment will help most.

Here are several ways for you, or you and your partner, to find the support that you need.

Talk with your health care team

It is important to speak openly with your doctor. For example, he or she can explain how your treatment may affect your sexual functioning. A doctor may also have suggestions or helpful advice for you and your spouse or partner. It's also important to remember that your doctor has many things to discuss with you related to your cancer and may refer you to another member of your cancer care team to help answer your sexual questions. Other members of the health care team, including oncology nurses and social workers, are also available to provide you with emotional and social support, help you develop effective coping strategies, provide counseling and education, and give you and/or your partner referrals to community resources.

Counseling

You may want to ask your oncologist for a referral to a sex therapist or counselor. In addition, couples counseling may help you have valuable conversations with your spouse or partner about how to cope with impotence or fertility issues. Counseling can help couples know how they can best support each other.

To find a sex therapist or counselor, you can search [The American Association of Sexuality Educators Counselors and Therapists \[2\]](#) website to find one near you.

Connect with others

You can also get support from those who have had similar experiences. Some people find online support communities or helplines useful. You can find encouragement and support, share stories, and offer hope. Some organizations like LIVESTRONG have programs like [Fertile Hope \[3\]](#) with a hotline that you can call to speak with someone about your fertility questions. You can also find support groups and oncology social workers by contacting [CancerCare \[4\]](#).

Other educational resources

Many organizations offer information for men and women with sexual or reproductive concerns. Be sure to discuss the information and any questions you may have with your doctor.

- [American Cancer Society: Sexual Side Effects in Men \[5\]](#)
- [American Cancer Society: Sexual Side Effects in Women \[6\]](#)
- [American Society for Reproductive Medicine \(ASRM\) \[7\]](#)
- [National Cancer Institute: Sexuality and Reproductive Issues \[8\]](#)
- [LIVESTRONG: Female Sexual Dysfunction \[9\]](#)
- [LIVESTRONG: Male Sexual Dysfunction \[10\]](#)
- [Institute for Fertility Preservation: Educational Resources \[11\]](#)

More information

[Relationships and Cancer \[12\]](#)

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Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[2] <http://www.aasect.org/directory.asp>

[3] <http://www.fertilehope.org/>

[4] <http://www.cancercares.org/>

[5] <http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/physicalsideeffects/sexualsideeffectsindex>

[6] <http://www.cancer.org/Treatment/TreatmentsandSideEffects/PhysicalSideEffects/SexualSideEffectsindex>

[7] <http://www.reproductivefacts.org/>

[8] <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/supportivecare/sexuality/Patient>

[9] <http://www.livestrong.org/Get-Help/Learn-About-Cancer/Cancer-Support-Topics/Physical-Effects-of-Cancer/Female-Sexual-Functioning-After-Cancer>

[10] <http://www.livestrong.org/Get-Help/Learn-About-Cancer/Cancer-Support-Topics/Physical-Effects-of-Cancer/Male-Sexual-Functioning-After-Cancer>

[11] <http://fertilitypreservation.org/educational-resources-main/video-topics>

[12] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25112>

[13] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25109>

[14] <http://www.cancer.net/node/22>