

Cancer treatment side effects can change how cancer patients look and feel. This stress can lead to sexual and intimacy problems for the patient and their partner. These challenges may include loss of desire, painful intercourse, and erectile dysfunction. This can create distress for you and your partner. There are ways to address both the practical and emotional aspects.

There are many factors that may make sex and intimacy difficult. They may include fatigue, pain, depression, medical appliances (like pumps), and ostomies. Cancer can also change how people feel about their bodies. Partners may worry about causing their loved one pain or discomfort. Also, there might be a break in intimacy during treatment. Partners may feel guilty about wanting to resume intimacy after a break. Staying silent about these feelings may make people feel more isolated. Talk to your partner about how you are feeling. Try to maintain intimacy through gentle touching, kissing, and physical closeness. Planning dates and times for intimacy can help both partners feel more comfortable.

Speaking with health care providers about your concerns may help. They may be able to offer solutions and support. You or your partner can talk to a gynecologist, urologist, or counselor. Many of them specialize in intimacy, sexuality, and/or fertility. They can help with physical and emotional concerns. Treatments include medications, tips to increase physical comfort, talk therapy, stress management, changing routines, and support in talking with your partner.

Cancer treatments may affect some patient's ability to have children. These treatments include radiation, chemotherapy, or surgery. This is true for both men and women. If you may want children in the future, discuss your options with your health care team before treatment begins. An open discussion will help you plan and know what to expect. The health care team may provide a referral to a fertility specialist. If this is not an option, there are other ways to grow your family. Talk to an expert who can help with these issues.



www.CancerSupportCommunity.org
1-888-793-9355



Cancer Support Community

888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/intimacy-sex-and-fertility-after-cancer

National Cancer Institute

800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/facing-forward

Fertile Hope/Livestrong

866-965-7205 • www.livestrong.org/we-can-help/livestrong-fertility

American Cancer Society

800-237-2345 • www.cancer.org

General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

Cancer Support Community • 888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

American Cancer Society • 800-227-2345 • www.cancer.org

CancerCare • 800-813-4673 • www.cancercare.org

Cancer.net • 888-651-3038 • www.cancer.net

Caregiver Action Network • 855-227-3640 • www.caregiveraction.org

Healthcare.gov • www.healthcare.gov

Livestrong Foundation • 866-673-7205 • www.livestrong.org

National Cancer Institute • 800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine • 888-644-6226 • www.nccam.nih.gov

Patient Advocate Foundation • 800-532-5274 • www.patientadvocate.org

Cancer Support Community Resources

Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org for more info.

Cancer Support Helpline® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

Open to Options® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs — With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation.

MyLifeLine — CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at www.MyLifeLine.org.

Grassroots Network — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate.

Cancer Experience Registry® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org.

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

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