

What Men Can Do

About Changes in Sexuality and Fertility



“It wasn’t easy, but I asked my doctor what changes I might have during and after treatment. I learned what to expect and how to manage these changes.”

Use this sheet to talk with your doctor or nurse. It’s important to get information that’s specific to you, your treatment(s), and health condition. Use the questions on the back to talk with your doctor.

Questions from men getting radiation therapy

Is it okay to have sex?

This is an important question to ask your doctor. He or she can explain what is recommended for you and your partner, based on the type of cancer you have and treatments you are receiving. Radiation therapy to most parts of the body doesn’t interfere with a man’s ability to have sex.

I don’t feel like having sex anymore. What’s wrong?

Be easy on yourself. You are going through a lot. You may be worried or tired from the treatment. Most likely you will feel better once treatment ends. For now, talk with your partner and find other ways to stay close to each other.

Questions from men getting radiation therapy to the pelvic area:

Will I still be able to have sex after treatment?

Some men are able to have sex without any problems once treatment has been completed. For other men, radiation therapy can cause problems in getting and/or keeping an erection, with ejaculation, or with sexual desire.

After radiation therapy to the pelvic area, some men notice slow changes in sexual function over the period of about a year. It is also normal for sexual function to change as men age.

Should pregnancy be prevented during treatment?

Yes, pregnancy should be prevented during and for some time after treatment. Talk with your doctor to learn when, and for how long, a birth control method should be used.

Will I be able to have children in the future?

Before treatment starts, talk with your doctor about your plans for a family. Let your doctor know if you would like to have children after treatment so you can plan for the future.

If you would like to be fertile and have children after treatment, you need to:

- ask your doctor how radiation therapy **may** affect or limit your fertility
- meet with a fertility specialist **before** you begin treatment
- learn about sperm banking and other options

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems or changes might I have during treatment? After treatment?
2. How long will these problems last?
3. What medicine or treatment could help with these problems?
4. What special precautions do I need to take during treatment? For example, based on the treatment I am receiving, does a condom or other form of birth control need to be used? When, and for how long?

Fertility-specific questions:

5. Will my fertility be affected by the treatment I receive?
6. What are all of my options now if I would like to have children in the future?

7. Would you give me the name of a fertility specialist?
8. Should my partner and I delay trying to have children? If so, for how long?

Resources that can help you:

American Cancer Society

Provides detailed information on a range of sexuality and fertility issues for men being treated for cancer.

1-800-227-2345

(1-800-ACS-2345)

www.cancer.org

(Note: Search on "fertility and men" or "sexuality and men" in the search box.)

Fertile Hope

Helps cancer patients talk with their doctor about fertility risks, parenthood options, and pregnancy after cancer.

1-866-965-7205

www.fertilehope.org

Oncofertility Consortium

Helps men and women find answers to cancer-related fertility questions, talk with their doctor, and find a fertility specialist.

1-866-708-3378

(1-866-708-FERT)

www.myoncofertility.org

www.savemyfertility.org



Revised February 2012

How can we help?

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: www.cancer.gov

Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 9 Radiation Therapy Side Effects Sheets at:
www.cancer.gov/radiation-side-effects

