

Sexuality

Some types of chemotherapy can cause changes that affect your sexuality. Whether you have sexual changes during chemotherapy may depend on any issues you may have had before treatment, such as age or other illnesses. Sexuality is an important part of your everyday life. It is important that you talk to your doctor or nurse if your treatment affects your sexuality.

Sexuality may be a difficult subject to talk about openly and honestly with others. You may not feel that you can talk to others, but maybe you will find some of this information helpful.

Some issues that may affect your sexual desires:

- Anxiety about your disease, treatment, or financial concerns
- Body image changes such as hair loss or surgery
- Side effects from treatment such as nausea, diarrhea, skin changes, fatigue and hormonal changes

Treatment related symptoms may include:

WOMEN

- Menopause symptoms such as hot flashes, vaginal dryness, feeling irritable, and irregular or no menstrual periods
- Bladder infections
- Vaginal infections that may include discharge and/or itching
- Lack of sexual desire

MEN

- Can't get or keep an erection
- Not able to reach climax
- Lack of sexual desire

What you can do:

- Talk to your doctor or nurse about sexuality.
- Talk to your partner about your feelings.
- Talk with your doctor or nurse about birth control and family planning.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if it is OK to have sex.
- Touching, holding and being close remains pleasurable and important.
- Explore new ways to show your love.
- Use pomegranate seed oil for vaginal dryness.

Additional information:

- Avoid sexual intercourse if your platelet count is low.
- Use personal lubricants when needed for sex (use water-based products such as KY jelly or Astroglide).
- Men should use condoms when having sex.
- Women should wear cotton underwear and avoid wearing tight fitting pants or shorts to lessen chance of yeast or bacterial infection.
- Women can cope with hot flashes by dressing in layers, staying active and reducing stress.

Talk to your doctor or nurse for additional help in managing these symptoms

What not to do:

- Do not keep your feelings to yourself.
- Do not isolate yourself from your partner.

**Most of the side effects that affect your sexuality are temporary and may go away after treatment. Always talk to your doctor or nurse regarding the effects your treatment may cause.*

You will find more information in the “Chemotherapy and You” Booklet.