

QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX AND CANCER TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE TREATMENT



Women of all ages value their sexuality. Studies show that 40-75% of women with cancer experience sexual function changes or problems after cancer treatment. Sexual function problems can be prevented and treated, if they are discussed. **Here are some questions to ask your doctor, relevant to most cancer types.**

It is best to ask these questions **BEFORE** you make decisions about cancer treatment. Even if sexual function is not a priority right now, you should know what to do and where to go if problems come up.

1. **Are there any treatment options that would give me both a good cancer outcome and preserve my sexual function?**
2. **Is there anything I can do that will help me preserve as much of my sexual function as possible?**
3. **Do I need to stop having sex? If so, how will I know when it's okay to start having sex again?**
4. **How might chemotherapy affect my sexual function?**
5. **How will different surgical options affect my ability to have normal sexual arousal and pleasure?**
6. **Could I try using estrogen in my vagina, like a cream, ring, or tablet, to make sex more comfortable?**
7. **How will shutting down my ovaries or blocking all the estrogen in my body affect my sexual function?**
8. **What will radiation in or near my vagina do to the normal functioning of my vagina and my clitoris?**
9. **My breasts are important for my sexual function. How will my breasts be different after this treatment?**
10. **Will my sexual function be better or worse if I have the ostomy procedure, compared to another option?**

“When you get that diagnosis, the first thing on your mind is, **how do I get treatment?** I would have liked to know that some women get sexual dysfunction after treatment. As you go along, you start to learn these things.”

-a woman with vaginal cancer

For more information about female sexual function in the context of cancer, visit www.womanlab.org, and connect:

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Important professional organizations recommend that doctors talk to women with cancer about sexual function:

National Comprehensive Cancer Network (www.nccn.org)

National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov)

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (www.acog.org)

Society of Gynecologic Oncology (www.sgo.org)

Scientific Network for Female Sexual Health and Cancer (www.cancersexnetwork.org)