

Life After Cancer: Sexuality and Intimacy Changes

Cancer and cancer treatment can affect many aspects of life, including sexual health. Some of the most common side effects that can affect a person's sexual health from cancer treatment are listed below. These potential changes may be temporary or may become permanent over time.

- Fatigue
- Pain with intercourse
- Urinary incontinence
- Bowel problems
- Body image changes
- Vaginal dryness
- Vaginal scarring
- Muscle weakness
- Irregular menstruation
- Loss of sexual desire
- Erectile dysfunction
- Loss of fertility

It is important to recognize that sexuality is more than being male or female. Sexuality involves emotions, feelings, experiences and is an integral part of the human experience. People experiencing health issues can have concerns regarding how treatment can affect sexuality. These concerns include, but are not limited to, changes to the physical, spiritual and emotional self.

Although a part of your general health, intimacy and sexual desire are often overlooked when someone is dealing with cancer. Intimacy includes both the emotional and physical displays of love and affection, including:

- How you and your partner share feelings
- How much time you spend together
- How you both express and receive physical affection

Intimacy is important in your overall well-being and should be considered in your health care treatment plan.

Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center offers dedicated sexual health clinics for men and women affected by cancer. If you are experiencing any cancer-related sexuality and intimacy concerns, please let your Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center's healthcare team know so that a referral can be placed tailored to your specific needs.