

Intimacy Matters

Cancer and cancer treatment affect many aspects of life. Some of the most common side effects from cancer treatment are:

- Fatigue
- Pain
- Urinary incontinence
- bowel problems
- body image changes
- Vaginal dryness or change in vaginal elasticity
- Anemia (low red blood cell count)
- Muscle loss
- Irregular menstruation
- Loss of sexual desire
- Erectile dysfunction

These potential changes may be temporary or may become permanent over time. Your health care team will discuss these side effects with you and how they can be treated. Talk to your health care team about any concerns or questions you have.

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; and
- 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. A professional counselor is available to help you and your partner with cancer-related sexuality and intimacy concerns. A counselor can provide brief supportive counseling and referral services tailored to your specific needs.

We also offer counseling to patients, couples and families who have other concerns such as: adjustment to the cancer diagnosis and treatment plan, coping with life changes and grief issues. You may ask your doctor for a referral for counseling services.

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