Ready to start planning your care? Call us at 800-525-2225 to make an appointment.
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Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

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Sexual Health Programs for Cancer Patients & Survivors
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Natural menopause involves a gradual decline in a woman's hormone levels — typically over several years — followed by the end of menstruation. When a woman is treated for cancer, menopause can begin prematurely and abruptly. A progression that should take years to complete can occur in a matter of months.

Premature menopause due to cancer treatment can be caused by surgery to remove the ovaries, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or hormone-blocking agents commonly taken by women who have certain types of breast cancer. Treatment-induced menopause can be temporary or permanent, depending on the type of treatment and your age when you receive it.

Every woman who goes through premature menopause is at risk for sexual and vaginal health complications. Symptoms are more intense and severe than those experienced during the natural process, and can include:

- Vaginal dryness, discomfort, and pain
- Difficulty with sexual arousal
- Pain during intercourse

These symptoms and the abrupt hormone changes of premature menopause can also have an emotional impact on women. You might experience feelings of anxiety, sadness, and loss, as well as a loss of interest in sexual contact.

Comprehensive Care

Our female sexual medicine team is led by Jeanne Carter, a clinical psychologist and certified sexual therapist. Dr. Carter and Female Sexual Medicine Nurse Practitioner Margaret Cheng will use a multidisciplinary approach to address your sexual and vaginal health challenges. During the initial evaluation, we will take a full medical history, discuss your concerns, and prepare a detailed treatment plan. Follow-up visits will be personalized to your specific physical and emotional needs.

A variety of options are available to help you manage the effects of cancer on your sexual health. Our experts will work with you to determine which strategies may benefit you. We provide:

- Education about female anatomy, vaginal health, and sexual health and intimacy
- Suggestions to enhance communication and intimacy with current or future partners

- Information about non-hormonal over-the-counter and prescription vaginal lubricants and moisturizers
- Treatments to address pain, including vaginal dilator therapy
- Referrals to physical therapists who can provide pelvic muscle (Kegel) exercises and therapies for problems with intercourse, incontinence, and pain

If you have sexual or vaginal health concerns related to cancer treatment, take action. Speak with someone on your medical team who can refer you to the Female Sexual Medicine and Women's Health Program. You can also contact us directly at 646-888-5076.

Services are provided at the Rockefeller Outpatient Pavilion and at the Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center.

PREVIOUS
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