Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Common Questions About Fertility After Cancer Treatment

This information explains how cancer treatment may affect your fertility (your ability to have biological children). It also answers some commonly asked questions about fertility and building your family after cancer treatment.

How cancer treatment may affect your fertility

Some cancer treatments can cause fertility problems that affect your ability to have a biological child. Not all cancer treatments cause fertility problems. It depends on:

- Your fertility before treatment.
- The type of surgery you had.
- The type and dose of chemotherapy you had.
- The area of your body treated with radiation and the dose of radiation you had.

Fertility problems from cancer treatment can be temporary or permanent. There are many things that affect fertility. This makes it hard to know for sure how cancer treatment may affect your fertility. If you have questions about how your treatment may affect your fertility, talk with your healthcare provider.

Talk with your healthcare provider about fertility preservation before treatment

Talk with your healthcare provider about your fertility preservation options before you start treatment. Fertility preservation is the process of saving eggs, sperm, or reproductive tissue before treatment.

Common questions about fertility and family building after cancer treatment

How long should I wait after treatment to try to have a child?

The length of time you need to wait may depend on the type of cancer and the treatment you had. We recommend waiting at least 1 year after chemotherapy or radiation before trying to have a child. This gives your body time to clear out any eggs or sperm that may have been damaged during treatment.

If you had a newer treatment (such as targeted or biologic therapy), talk with your healthcare provider. They will let you know how long you will need to wait, depending on the type of treatment you had.

How will I know if I'm fertile after treatment?

After your treatment, you can see a reproductive endocrinologist to discuss your fertility. A reproductive endocrinologist is a doctor that specializes in fertility. They will recommend you have different tests to check your fertility after cancer treatment.

We recommend waiting at least 1 year after completing cancer treatment to see a reproductive endocrinologist. This gives your body time to recover from treatment. Talk with your healthcare provider for more information or for a referral.

Will my child be healthy?

After your cancer treatment, your healthcare provider will recommend you wait a certain amount of time before you try to have children. Research shows that it's important to wait for the recommended amount of time. If you do, your child will not have an increased risk for birth defects or other health problems.

To learn more about your family building options, read:

- *Building Your Family After Cancer Treatment: For People Born With Testicles* (www.mskcc.org/pe/building-family-born-testicles)

- *Building Your Family After Cancer Treatment: For People Born With Ovaries and a Uterus* (www.mskcc.org/pe/building-family-ovaries-uterus)

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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