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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Common Sexual Health Issues for Men with Cancer

The most common physical problems that men face following cancer treatment include:

- erectile dysfunction, or the inability to achieve or maintain an erection
- premature or delayed ejaculation
- physical deformities, such as curvature of the penis during erection (Peyronie's disease), which can occur as a result of certain prostate cancer therapies
- fertility problems
- low testosterone levels

The anxiety surrounding a cancer diagnosis and the fatigue that accompanies treatment can also disturb your hormones and emotions, decreasing your desire for sexual activity. For example, the hormone adrenaline is released when you are worried, stressed, or angry — feelings that people with cancer may experience during various stages of the disease. Unfortunately, adrenaline is also a powerful hormone that prevents an erection from occurring.

Some men may also experience a loss of sexual confidence after cancer and its treatment. Restoring this self-assurance is a complex process that involves not only the patient, but his partner as well.

Personalized Sexual Health Resources at Memorial Sloan Kettering

Our men's sexual and reproductive medicine team includes urologists, nurse practitioners, mental health professionals, social workers, and couples' therapists who collaborate to provide individualized care for each patient. This group is led by urologist and microsurgeon John Mulhall.

Most men can be successfully treated for cancer-related sexual problems. In fact, our experts have treated men of all ages with various types of cancer.

Your care team will take a multidisciplinary approach to discussing and addressing your physical and emotional concerns related to sexual health. We will also take a full medical history to identify additional risk factors for sexual health problems, such high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

We use this information to develop a personalized treatment plan to help you manage the effects of cancer on your sexual health. Our strategies include:

- medications to treat erectile and ejaculatory dysfunction

- hormone replacement for low testosterone levels
- fertility preservation, including sperm extraction
- postsurgery rehabilitation programs, such as penile rehabilitation after prostate cancer surgery
- counseling for individuals and couples
- suggestions to enhance communication and intimacy with current or future partners

Our male sexual health specialists can provide these and other treatment options to help you overcome any barriers preventing you from achieving a high quality of life when it comes to your sexual health.

If you have sexual or reproductive health concerns related to cancer treatment, take action. Speak with someone on your medical team who can refer you to the Male Sexual Reproductive Medicine Program. You can also contact us directly at 646-888-6024.

Additional Resources

- Starting Your Treatment with the Male Sexual and Reproductive Medicine Program
- Building Your Family After Cancer Treatment: Information for Men
- Sperm Banking
- Why One Man Preserved His Fertility Before Cancer Treatment | Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (VIDEO)
- Fertility Preservation: Testicular Tissue Extraction in Pre-Pubertal Boys

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Female Sexual Medicine & Women's Health Program

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Cancer, and Sexual Health FAQs

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