

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [646-926-0945](tel:646-926-0945) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)
[Back](#)

[Medical History, Cancer & Treatment](#)
[Learn About Cancer & Treatment](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Inclusion & belonging](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

FOR THE MEDIA

This is a very personal decision that will vary with the individual. Oftentimes the decision will change given the situation and personalities involved. But for most people, telling someone about a cancer history is a matter of timing and trust. You have to figure out what is right for you and your relationship to cancer. Some people feel it is important to let a person get to know YOU first, and not just your cancer diagnosis. So in these instances, people may wait until things progress to the point where keeping the cancer history a secret feels more uncomfortable than telling their story. Others feel completely different about this process. Some people feel they are a whole new person because of their diagnosis and do not want to sidestep cancer. These individuals may choose to disclose early on as a part of their personal history and the many significant experiences that inform who they are. Both are correct, and both are particular to the survivor's personality, comfort level, and understanding of the particular situation.

The cancer treatment has affected my desire to have sex. Is there anything I can do or will it be this way forever?

Cancer changes a person in many ways, both physically and emotionally. It's not surprising, then, that so

many people who have finished treatment tell us that their sexual life has been affected. First of all your body has gone through surgery or treatment that may have affected your sexual function or altered your physical appearance. Secondly, you may be feeling afraid that, having gone through cancer, others won't find you desirable. The question "Why would anyone want to be with someone who's had cancer?" is one we hear often. As for those already in a relationship prior to their diagnosis, it can be a challenge to go from being a patient back to being an intimate partner after going through treatment. These adjustments take time, but there are things you can do that can help. With regard to physical changes, there are staff at Memorial Sloan Kettering who specialize in men and women's sexual health and who can speak with you about treatments that may help to improve your sexual function. Please refer to the [Sexual Health](#) section of the Web site to learn more about this important quality-of-life issue.

The process of learning to feel loveable and desirable again can also be supported. Here are some quick suggestions: Time spent becoming reacquainted with your body in a sexual way, as well as talking with your partner about your feelings, can help. You may also consider setting aside special time with your partner, at your own pace, to nurture the intimate part of your relationship. Keep in mind that those around you, even those just getting to know you, will pick up on your own feelings and attitude about yourself. If you convey a sense of confidence and project the message that you have many wonderful things to offer (your sharp sense of humor, your kindness and compassion, or your ability to whip up a great meal), people will respond in kind. Joining a post-treatment workshop or support group, or speaking with a counselor who has worked with people who have had cancer, can help in this process of getting to know and feel good about yourself again. Please contact Memorial Sloan Kettering's [Resources for Life After Cancer program](#) at [646-888-8106](tel:646-888-8106) for more information on how we can help.

Are there any options for women wanting to start a family when cancer treatment has affected their ability to become pregnant?

Treatment for cancer may affect your fertility. This means that it may not be possible for you to have a child naturally. Coping with a cancer diagnosis and treatment is not easy. Some people find losing their fertility as difficult to accept as the cancer itself. If you are finished with treatment and would like to find out more about your fertility options, please refer to the Fertility & Parenthood section of our Web site for information on the options and resources available to you after cancer.