

Sexual Health:

A Guide for Gynecological Cancer Survivors

What do you need to know about your sexual health?

Cancer and its treatment can affect your body in many ways. No matter what type of sexual relationship you are in, sexual health concerns after cancer are important to discuss with your healthcare team, just like any other post-treatment side effect.

Sexual health concerns

Here are some of the sexual health concerns that gynecological cancer survivors may experience. Please note, this list is for information only. You may or may not experience these issues.

- Painful sex
- Vaginal dryness
- Lack of interest in sex and intimacy
- Decreased arousal
- Vaginal shortening/narrowing
- Reduced ability to achieve orgasm
- Bleeding after intercourse
- Fear and anxiety about sex

How to access support:

- Contact your healthcare team. Your healthcare team can evaluate your needs and provide a referral to other professionals who can help.
- Talk to a registered nurse or find health services using [Health811](#) (formerly Telehealth). You can call 811 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007) or use the [online chat](#).
- Find services in your area with the Canadian Cancer Society's [Community Services Locator](#).

Talking to your healthcare team

It is normal if you don't feel comfortable starting this conversation with your healthcare team. Here are some questions to try:

- When will I feel the desire to have sex again?
- It hurts when I have sex, why?
- What can be done about pain during sex?



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Other things you can do

Talk to your partner

If you feel uncomfortable talking about sex with your partner, you are not alone. Many people find it challenging to talk about sex with their partner. Here are some questions to try:

- What do you value about sex?
- What does our sexual relationship mean to you?
- What do you enjoy most about our sex life?
- What might be hard about trying new things?
- How should we talk about what works and what doesn't work for us?

Try supportive therapies

You may be referred to a specialist who may offer supportive strategies or therapies. Supportive strategies may include:

- lubricants and vaginal moisturizers
- education
- sexual health therapy
- estrogen therapy
- vaginal dilators
- pelvic floor physical therapy

More information

Here are some more resources that you may find helpful:

- [Life After Primary Gynecological Cancer Treatment: A Guide for Survivors and Caregivers](#) by Queen's University School of Nursing can help you prepare for life after gynecological cancer treatment. It provides information for people who are recovering from cancer and care partners. (Information and resources on sexual health can be found on pg. 21-25 and on pg. 44-45)
- [Sex, Intimacy and Cancer](#) by Canadian Cancer Society gives information on sexual well-being and possible solutions to help you manage them.

The recommendations in this guide are based on published evidence and expert consensus. Information within this document is intended for informational purposes only. Please be advised that this guide does not establish a healthcare provider-patient relationship, nor should it replace professional medical advice, diagnosis, and/or care. Please consult your health care team to address your specific questions or concerns. OH expressly disclaims any responsibility or liability for damages, loss, injury or liability resulting from your reliance on information within this guide. OH retains all copyright, trademark, and all other rights in the guide, including all text and graphic images. Other than for personal use, no portion of this resource may be used or reproduced, or distributed, transmitted or "mirrored" in any form, or by any means, without OH's prior written permission.

Should you require this information in an accessible format, please contact 1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, info@ontariohealth.ca.

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