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Sex and Sexuality for Men
After Cancer Treatment and Transplant: Is this the new ‘normal’?

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Sex and Transplant: 
*Do those two things really go together?*

Men who are treated for cancer often don’t think about sex for a while.

Suddenly, time has gone by... *now what?*
Sex and Sexuality:
Two Parts of the Same Idea

Sex
• The activity

Sexuality
• The feelings
Transplant Affects Sex and Sexuality, and not usually in a good way!

• Cancer and treatments affect how you feel physically, mentally, emotionally and energetically

• Transplant does not have to end your sex life, but it will, if you let it...

• **When** is the right time to talk about sex or sexuality? **NOW!**
How Cancer Treatments Affect the Body

• **Surgery, Radiation, Transplant**
• **Skin:** GVHD, texture, sensitivity, scars, elasticity
• **Lymph Nodes:** Lymphedema
• **Nerves:** Sensation
• **Blood Flow**
• **Glands:** Hormone Changes
How Cancer Treatments Affects the Body:

- **Chemotherapy & Transplant**
- Low blood counts
- *Infection risk (white cells)*
- *Bleeding risk (platelets)*
- *Fatigue (red cells)*
- Nausea, appetite, weight change
- Bowel and bladder function
- Sores in the mouth, gut and rectum, GVHD changes
- Fertility
Cancer Treatments and Sex

Body changes that effect sex:

• Skin sensitivity, scars
• Pain
• Weight changes
• Bowel and bladder function
• Hormone, erectile and orgasm changes
• Fatigue
• Yes, transplant can change sexual function
Cancer and Sexuality

Sexual changes include:

• decreased desire, arousal, orgasm
• confidence, body image, self esteem
• role changes (feeling like a ‘patient’ instead of a ‘lover’)
• hormone changes
• energy level
• worry, fear, depression, anxiety, and even
• relationship satisfaction
Partner Changes

Communication makes a difference!

- *It takes two to tango...*
- role changes – in and out of the bedroom
- fear of causing pain
- not wanting to be demanding
- fatigue, worry, stress
- not knowing when or how to bring it up
What Can Help? How Do I Start?

– Bring up your worries, fears, and concerns with your healthcare providers

– Talk to your partner

– Don’t expect them to know how you feel or what is happening

– Find resources - books and support groups

Ask for help, even if you are not sure how...
It Isn’t Always About *Sex*...

- Hand holding, snuggling, and back rubs count!
- Spend time watching a favorite movie
- Look through photos, talk about memories
- Do projects together
- Go for a walk together
- *Create time for romance to return*
Sex and Sexuality – Alone or With a Partner

• Your BRAIN is your biggest sex organ

• Think ahead, imagine...

• Allow *time* to not feel rushed

• Let each time be *its own* time
Sex and Sexuality – Alone or With a Partner

• Set some ground rules, but remember to have fun!

• *All of these considerations are the same alone or with a partner!*
The ‘How To’ of How To Start

• Touch yourself, or guide your partner to touch you, in ways that feel good.
• This can be anywhere on the body, even an arm or back can be a good place to start!
• Move on to more sensual/sexual touching if that feels comfortable.
The ‘How To’ of How To Start

• Lubricants for genital touching can be helpful.
• Go slowly, be willing to slow down, stop, move back to another area, “check in” with what feels good and even take a break.

• Tears, talking, negotiating and even giggling is allowed.
Things That Can Help

Lubricants

– **Water based:**
  – can be used with any toys or condoms
  – easy to obtain can be used anywhere on the body
  – Not all are created equal, some get sticky, some are scented, some are organic, etc.

– **Silicone lubricants:**
  – super slippery,
  – can be staining, and
  – should not be used with silicone toys.
  – Other things, such as olive oil, can be used.
  – Hand lotion, Vaseline, glycerin based products or essential oils should generally not be used due to irritation or risk of infection
Things That Can Help

**Medications** may help to maintain erections or make erections firmer.

- **Toys and Tools**
  - Vacuum pumps, hand held devices for masturbation and cock rings can be used to assist with erections.
  - Vibrators can be used internally or externally to stimulate the penis, prostate, nipples or other body parts.
  - Books and movies can provide fantasy and mood material.
  - Consider clothing that makes you feel sexy or accentuates or hides areas.
  - A journal or “love notes” can give you a place to write down what you’d like if talking about it is too difficult.
The First Step is to **START**

- **Avoiding the topic of sex won’t get you far**
- Talk to your partner (or potential partner)
- If you have been together a long time, remind each other stories about times when sex and intimacy were terrific

- Talk to someone you trust if you need information or encouragement
- Resources are available...
Written material on cancer and sexuality

- **Man, Cancer, Sex** by Anne Katz
- **Woman, Cancer, Sex** by Anne Katz
- **Sexuality for the Woman with Cancer** by the American Cancer Society
- **Sexuality for the Man with Cancer** by the American Cancer Society
- **Making Love Again: Hope for Couples Facing Loss of Sexual Intimacy** by Keith Laken
- **Sexuality and Fertility After Cancer** by Leslie R. Schrorer
- **Intimacy and Sexuality for Cancer Patients and Their Partners: A booklet of Tips and Ideas for Your Journey of Recovery** (PDF) [www.sexualadviceassociation.co.uk](http://www.sexualadviceassociation.co.uk)
- **Saving Your Sex Life: A guide for men with prostate cancer** by John Mulhall
- **Childhood Cancer Survivors: A Practical Guide to Your Future** by Nancy Keene, Wendy Hobbie and Kathy Ruccione
- **This Should Not Be Happening: Young Adults With Cancer** by Anne Katz

- *Try searching Amazon or Barnes and Noble sites with key words ‘cancer and sexuality’*
Resources: stores, websites and more

- **SCCA Resource Center** on the 3rd floor of the SCCA: lending library, booklets, magazines and community resources

- **SCCA Patient & Family Education** links on the SCCA website and on Facebook to educational events, resources and videos [www.seattlecca.org/practical-emotional-support.cfm](http://www.seattlecca.org/practical-emotional-support.cfm)

- **SCCA Survivorship Clinic** welcomes any cancer survivor who has completed their acute cancer treatment, at SCCA or any other location. 206-288-1024 [www.seattlecca.org/survivorship](http://www.seattlecca.org/survivorship)

- **Healthcare providers and staff:** doctors, NP’s, PA’s, nurses, psychologists, social workers, counselors, chaplains and others are willing to talk to patients, survivors and family members. Some providers are more comfortable than others – ask!

- **Shine:** *A unique cancer specialties store* 207 Pontius Ave N, Suite 101, with many books and products mentioned in this talk as well as cards, clothing, and more [www.sccashine.org](http://www.sccashine.org) 206-288-7560

- **Babeland:** *Seattle’s Adult Toy Store* 707 E Pike Street [www.babeland.com](http://www.babeland.com) 206-328-2914

- American Cancer Society [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

- [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org)

- Try web searches for articles and blogs using ‘cancer and sexuality’ or ‘healthy sexuality’ to avoid porn
The “New Normal”...

• ...can be pretty darn good!
Time for questions and discussion