



Talking with Your Partner

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For Everyone

WHAT TO KNOW

It's important to talk about your concerns, feelings, and beliefs and what would make you feel better.

Overview

Even for a couple that has been together a long time, staying connected after cancer can be a challenge at first. How do you start the conversation and express your needs when it comes to sex?

It is important to talk about your concerns, feelings, and beliefs about your sex life and what would make you feel better. It is also important to take your partner's concerns, feelings, and beliefs into consideration.



It's important to talk about your feelings and what would make you feel better.

Conversation tips

Having an open, honest conversation is key to moving forward. Here are some tips:

- Pick a private time to talk about sex outside the bedroom.
- Ask questions to understand your partner's concerns better.
- Focus on your partner's comments, not on what you plan to say in response.
- Repeat the comments in your own words.
- Be specific and positive about what you'd like to change.
- Acknowledge that your partner's views matter to you.

By approaching the topic of sex and intimacy openly, you can avoid blame, keep the conversation positive, and give your partner a better sense of how you're feeling.

Starting fresh: dating after cancer

After cancer, you may experience physical and emotional changes and concerns, especially around sex, that can affect how you feel about dating. It is normal to worry about how another person will react to physical things like scars or hair loss. You may also find it awkward to bring up sexual problems or loss of fertility, which can make feeling close even harder.

How and when to bring it up

You may wonder about the best way and time to tell a new person in your life about your cancer experience. There's no "right" answer about when to tell someone. Wait until you're comfortable and trust the person with your feelings.

It may help to write down or practice what to say. Be ready to answer any questions. You may also want to talk to your doctor or a counselor about your dating concerns and fears of becoming intimate with a new partner.

Feeling intimate after treatment

It may be hard to feel intimate after cancer because of physical or emotional changes. When you're struggling with your body image, remember to:

- Be proud of your body. It got you through treatment, after all!
- Think of things that help you feel more confident.
- Focus on the positive.
- Be open to change.

Wenora

"You can't leave out the important aspect of talking with your partner. There are gonna be days that you don't feel like being touched or that you maybe just want some alone time," says Wenora, who survived several kinds of cancer. "We would talk a lot, hold hands. We do other things besides just being intimate to help keep the closeness together."

[Wenora's video](#)

When your partner has cancer

When your partner has cancer, it can be hard to understand what he or she is going through. Your partner also may have trouble understanding what *you* are going through. Ask yourself:

- Am I feeling overwhelmed? Stressed?
- Do I feel lonely or abandoned?
- How will my role or situation change after treatment?
- Do I think my partner and I should talk about our sexual relationship?

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; Division of Cancer Prevention and Control](#)