

About Your Prostate Cancer Treatment

Radiation



Radiation destroys cancer cells by targeting them with strong and focused energy.

How will radiation affect your sex life?

Every kind of prostate cancer treatment causes changes to sexual function. Here are some ways radiation may affect your sex life:

Possible change in fertility

- Your treatment will affect your fertility. If you think that you might want to father a child in the future, please discuss this with your healthcare provider.

What can you do about the sexual side effects?

- Your doctor can prescribe medications or devices to help you have erections.
- A certified sex therapist can help you find a way to stay sexually active. In the US, you can find a certified sex therapist near you through the website for the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists – aasect.org.

Problems with erections (Erectile dysfunction / ED)

- Even though radiation treatment is focused on the prostate, it can cause scarring in the tissues around the prostate, including the nerves that control erections.
- After treatment, erections gradually become less firm.
- This can happen soon after treatment, or years later.

Possible change in sensitivity and orgasm

- Some men experience loss of sensitivity in the penis in addition to ED.
- For some men, orgasms are also less intense.
- When you reach orgasm, less semen will come out.

Problems with leaking urine during sex

Some men leak urine during arousal, intercourse, or orgasm. Some men feel embarrassed by it, but you can work through these emotions.

- Urine is a normal body fluid, just like ejaculate, sweat or saliva. It won't hurt you or your partner, even if it comes out during penetration, unless your partner has a history of recurrent infections. Using a condom will create a safe barrier.
- If you can, work on accepting this as a minor nuisance.
- You can disguise urine by using lubricant to moisturize the penis during sexual activity.
- You can also use condoms to contain the leakage.



Sexual Recovery

What is sex like after radiation?



What **usually** happens to a man's body during sex?

What **changes** after prostate cancer treatment?

Desire

- Desire develops and grows when we think about sex, have fantasies about sexual situations, enjoying those thoughts and begin to imagine making it happen.

After prostate cancer treatment

- Most men continue to have their usual desire for sex.

Arousal

- The body reacts to those thoughts and gets ready for sex.
- Heart starts pumping a bit faster.
- Blood pressure goes a bit higher.
- Breathing gets heavier.
- Blood begins to flow to sexually sensitive areas of the body.
- Men get an erection.

After prostate cancer treatment

- You may feel less sensitivity in your penis and you will need longer stimulation.
- Over time, erections can become less firm. This can happen soon after treatment, or years later.
- You can still have erections with the help of aids like vacuum pumps, penile suppositories, injections or pills.

Plateau

- The body gets ready to have an orgasm.
- Excitement builds with stimulation and the feeling of pleasure.
- The body begins to tense up.
- Men's testicles withdraw up into the scrotum and the erection becomes very hard.

After prostate cancer treatment

- It may take longer to reach orgasm.

Orgasm

- The body suddenly releases sexual tension.
- Muscles in the pelvic floor contract or spasm.
- Men release semen.

After prostate cancer treatment

- Your orgasm may be different. You will likely still be able to reach orgasm, but it may take longer. Your orgasm may feel less intense.
- When you reach orgasm, less semen will come out.

Resolution / Refractory Period

- The body relaxes.
- Muscles relax, blood pressure drops, there is a feeling of satisfaction and wellbeing.
- Men usually need recovery time before they can reach orgasm again.
- If the orgasm is experienced with a partner, couples often feel relaxed and connected.

After prostate cancer treatment

- You will need to wait longer before you can reach orgasm again. You will still feel relaxation and pleasure after orgasm.

