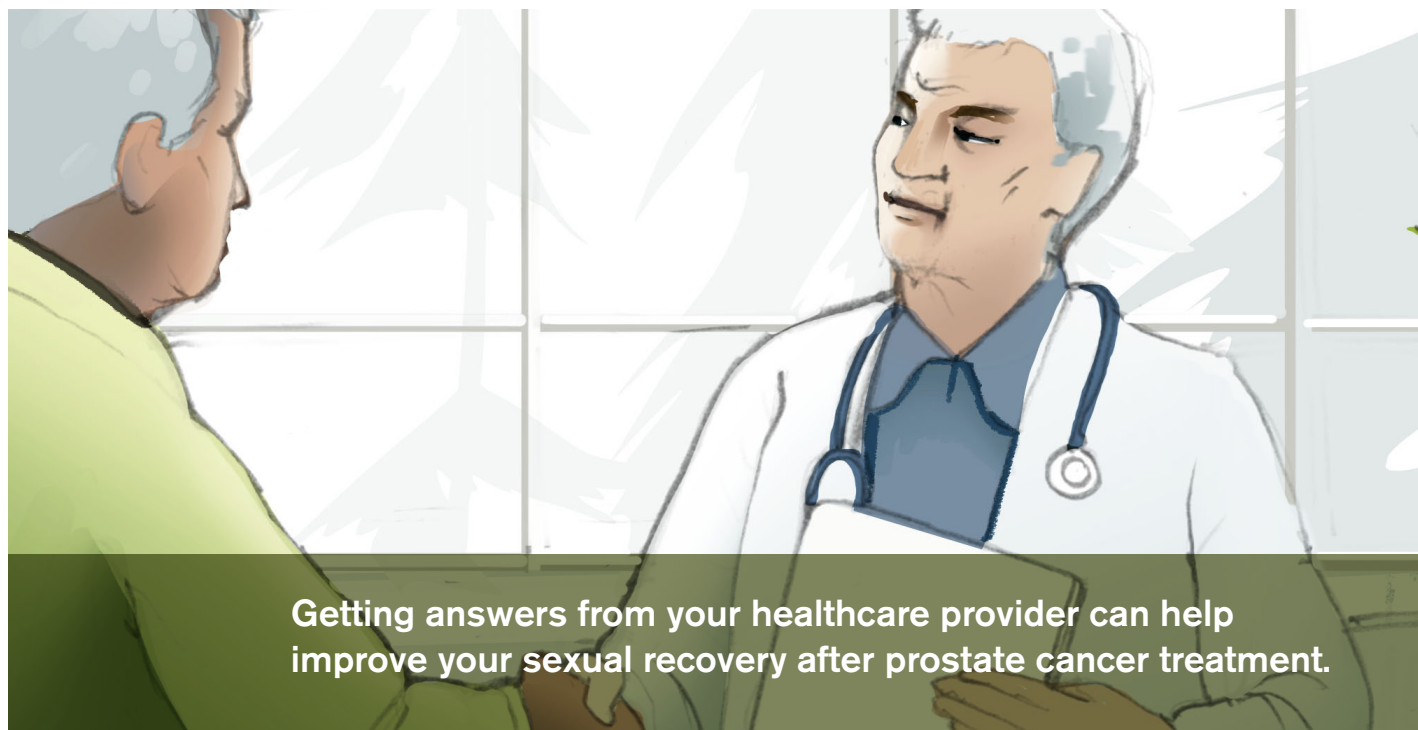


# Sexual Recovery

## Talking With Your Healthcare Provider



Getting answers from your healthcare provider can help improve your sexual recovery after prostate cancer treatment.

**If your healthcare provider is uncomfortable discussing your sexual concerns, you might need to be proactive and find other people on your healthcare provider's team who could help you or provide other resources.**

All treatments for prostate cancer have sexual side effects. If sexual health is important to you, you will need to have access to resources and information to help you. Your healthcare providers can provide answers or point you towards others with the expertise to help you. Don't hesitate to ask your cancer healthcare providers questions. You have a right to have that information.

Research has shown that people who maintain open communication with their healthcare providers tend to be more satisfied with the care they receive. Finding ways to talk about sexuality and prostate cancer can help improve your sexual recovery and quality of life.

### **Your wish to have your questions answered is legitimate**

If you feel nervous about bringing up sexual health, remind yourself:

- You're not alone
- Your issues are real
- Your concerns are valid

### **Who can help?**

You can begin by talking to your doctor or to your nurse during a follow up appointment. They may refer you to other specialists for specific concerns. Some of these specialists are physical therapists, sex therapists, mental health professionals, and social workers.





## Sexual Recovery: Talking with Your Provider

### Before your appointment

---

#### Ask yourself:

- What was your sexual function like before treatment?
  - How important is sex to you and your partner?
  - What are your current goals for sexual intimacy and sexual activity after treatment?
- 

#### Prepare your questions

- Before speaking to your healthcare provider, set time aside with your partner to think about what you want to ask.
  - Make a list of questions and then a short-list of your top questions, in case you don't have time to get to all of them.
  - If you feel shy, rehearse asking the questions. You can role play the questions with your partner or a trusted friend.
  - Make an agreement with your partner that you'll help each other get the questions asked.
- 

#### Prepare your provider

You can introduce the subject during an office visit, or to leave as a message when scheduling an appointment:

- "I would like to discuss questions about my sexual health after treatment during this (the next) appointment."

### Start the discussion

Let your healthcare provider know that you appreciate being able to talk about this topic because it's important to you. It will be an ice-breaker for both you and your provider.

- Begin to go through your questions.
  - Ask your healthcare provider to be available for follow up questions after the appointment.
  - Take notes on the answers.
- 

#### Sample questions to ask your provider

##### Erection problems:

- Given my age and how my erections are now, what can I expect after my treatment?
- Can I do anything to help my erections get better?
- If I have erection problems after treatment, will they be permanent?

##### Treatments for erection problems:

- If I have problems with erections, can you help me decide what treatments for erections might work for me?
- Can you tell me about the side-effects?
- Will there be anyone, after treatment, who can help me work on erection problems?

##### Penile shrinkage:

- Can I expect my penis to shrink?
- What causes it?
- Is there a way to reverse it?

##### Ability to have desire for sex (libido):

- Will my libido/desire change after treatment?
- Is that change permanent?
- If I don't have libido, can I still have orgasms?

##### Ability to have an orgasm:

- Will I be able to have an orgasm after my treatment?
- Will it be the same or different?
- Will it take longer to get to orgasm?
- Will I still ejaculate?

##### Urine leakage during sexual activity:

- Is it normal to have leakage during sex after prostate cancer treatment?
- Does this get better?
- Can the urine hurt my partner?

##### Questions for gay/bisexual men:

Will it feel different to receive anal sex (bottom) after my prostate cancer treatment?

Will I be able to get a strong enough erection to penetrate a partner (top) during anal sex?

Do I need to avoid receiving anal sex after surgery or radiation treatment? If so, for how long?

##### General Questions:

- What should my expectations be for recovery of my erectile function?
- What strategies and resources for sexual recovery are available for my partner and me?

