

## Sexuality Resources for Women and Girls

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### Suggestions:

- Talk to your medical provider. If they haven't initiated the conversation, ask how proposed treatments will affect your sexual function. There may be difficult tradeoffs (eg chance of cure vs effect on sexual function), but you can decide what is right for you.
- Take your time to figure out what you want and need regarding intimacy. You may experience physical, emotional, and spiritual changes after your treatment. These changes may affect your ability or desire to sexually connect as you did before cancer. It is important to identify what you want in your life regarding physical and emotional intimacy.
- Regarding emotional intimacy, consider what you love about yourself, what activities you enjoy and find interesting. Consider how you want to experience love and affection in your relationship. Does it involve touching, or walking together holding hands? Does it involve music or doing outdoor activities? There are as many ways to connect to each other as there are human beings. And remember, one type of intimacy can lead to the other.
- Communication with your partner will never be more important than it is now. The sexual side effects of treatment may force you to reset expectations as it relates to physical intimacy. Couples often need to rewrite their sexual scripts after cancer treatment. A sexual script is how we transition from a nonsexual situation to a sexual one. This will involve understanding what's changed as it relates to how or where you enjoy being touched. The how, what, when, where, and why of making love is up to you.
- You may decide to change your sexual script with your partner. This does not mean you are less whole or less of a person. It means you are a person who has had to make difficult choices to fight for her life, health, and sexuality
- Physical intimacy should be focused on relaxation and pleasure through touching with no expectation of orgasm. Experiment with relaxation, massage exercises, and extended foreplay.
- Take time to rest ... when you are ready, being physically active will help keep your energy level high.
- Yoga or Mindfulness-based stress reduction and yoga may reduce anxiety, improve sleep, and overall quality of life.
- Changes in your sex life do not mean you are less whole or less of a person. They are simply the result of being a person who has had to make difficult choices and fight for her life, health, and sexuality

## BRIEF SEXUAL SYMPTOM CHECKLIST FOR WOMEN<sup>1</sup>

Please answer the following questions about your overall sexual function:

1. Are you satisfied with your sexual function?

Yes  No

If no, please continue.

2. How long have you been dissatisfied with your sexual function?

3a. The problem(s) with your sexual function is:

(mark one or more)

1 Problem with little or no interest in sex

2 Problem with decreased genital sensation (feeling)

3 Problem with decreased vaginal lubrication (dryness)

4 Problem reaching orgasm

5 Problem with pain during sex

6 Other:

3b. Which problem is most bothersome? (circle)

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Would you like to talk about it with your doctor?

Yes  No

### Websites (alphabetical)

**A manifesto on the preservation of sexual function in women and girls with cancer** by Dr. Stacy Tessler Lindau and colleagues from the University of Chicago's Program in Integrative Sexual Medicine (PRISM), published in American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology 2005;213(2):166-174

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0002937815003208](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0002937815003208)

[www.uchospitals.edu/specialties/obgyn/prism.html](http://www.uchospitals.edu/specialties/obgyn/prism.html)

**American Academy of Pediatrics** publishes guidelines, based on age and developmental stage, for talking to children and adolescents about sexuality. See also **A manifesto** (above) for resources

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) <http://www2.aap.org/visit/ParentsMatterBrochure.pdf>

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/126/3/583.full.pdf> (Pediatrics 2010;126(3):583-590)

**American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists** has a resource list of certified sex therapists by specialty and geographic location [www.aasect.org](http://www.aasect.org)

**American Cancer Society** website has a female-specific 37 item index of sex-related topics

[www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/physicalsideeffects/sexualsideeffects/women/sexualityforthewoman/index](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/physicalsideeffects/sexualsideeffects/women/sexualityforthewoman/index)

[www.cancer.org/acs/groups/cid/documents/webcontent/002912.pdf](http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/cid/documents/webcontent/002912.pdf)

**American Physical Therapy Association** has a resource list of women's health certified pelvic physical therapists and information about pelvic physical therapy [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)

**American Psychosocial Oncology Society** has a HELPLINE and resources of people with cancer including young adult cancer resources and links to peer support programs [www.aposociety.org](http://www.aposociety.org)

**American Society of Clinical Oncology** has a patient education video called “Moving Forward” about dating and sexuality for young adults with cancer

[www.cancer.net/multimedia/videos/youngadultscancer/datingandsexuality](http://www.cancer.net/multimedia/videos/youngadultscancer/datingandsexuality)

**Association of Reproductive Health Professionals** has patient resources on sexuality including cancer treatment side effects [www.arhp.org/topics/sexandsexuality/patientresources](http://www.arhp.org/topics/sexandsexuality/patientresources)

**Everything nobody tells you about cancer treatment and your sex life: from A to Z.** Free 41-page guide <http://kanwa.org/sexualhealth/ahzguide>

**International Society for the Study of Women’s Sexual Health** has a resource list of sexual health specialists [www.isswsh.org](http://www.isswsh.org)

**International Society for Sexual Medicine** website has an ‘education for all’ section with sexual health Questions & Answers about female sexual health, and Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder. Also has the topic of ‘How might treatment for gynecologic cancer affect a woman’s sex life?’ [www.issm.info/](http://www.issm.info/)

**Katz A, Woman, Cancer, Sex.** A book by Canadian doctor of nursing who has dedicated her career to education, Pittsburgh, PA: Hygeia Media, 2009

**Krychman M,** gynecologist who has written 2 books for women in the ‘100 Questions & Answers’ format, one specifically about breast cancer and the other for women living with any cancer.

<http://www.amazon.com/MichaelL.Krychman/e/B001IZX6L6>

**Living Beyond Breast Cancer** has a 31-page guide to intimacy and sexuality pamphlet

[www.lbbc.org/understandingbreastcancer/guidestounderstandingbreastcancer/guide-to-understanding-intimacyandsexuality](http://www.lbbc.org/understandingbreastcancer/guidestounderstandingbreastcancer/guide-to-understanding-intimacyandsexuality)

**Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction** can improve quality of life and vigor and lower anxiety, fatigue, and anger after cancer diagnosis [www.uihealthcare.org/mindfulness/](http://www.uihealthcare.org/mindfulness/)

**National Cancer Institute** website unisex and sex-specific resources on body changes, sex life and dating, with links to detailed information about fertility issues [www.cancer.gov/aboutcancer/coping/selfimage](http://www.cancer.gov/aboutcancer/coping/selfimage)

**Scientific Network on Female Sexual Health and Cancer** has a resource list for cancer survivors [www.cancersexnetwork.org](http://www.cancersexnetwork.org)

**Society for Sex Therapy and Research** has a therapist directory where you can search for a certified sex therapist in your area [www.sstarnet.org](http://www.sstarnet.org)

**Soul Source** provides several solutions for vaginal health, offering wide range of vaginal dilators for vaginoplasty, vaginismus, vaginal agenesis and stenosis. [www.soulsource.com](http://www.soulsource.com)

**Susan G. Komen For the Cure** website has a pull down menu of quality of life topics including sexuality and intimacy [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

## Program for Young Women with Breast Cancer

[www.dana-farber.org/AdultCare/TreatmentandSupport/TreatmentCentersandClinicalServices/BreastCancerTreatmentCenter/ProgramforYoungWomenwithBreastCancer.aspx#About](http://www.dana-farber.org/AdultCare/TreatmentandSupport/TreatmentCentersandClinicalServices/BreastCancerTreatmentCenter/ProgramforYoungWomenwithBreastCancer.aspx#About)

**PYNK: Breast Cancer Program for Young Women** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3557339/>

**Yoga** can improve quality of life and reduce fatigue related to breast cancer treatment and radiation therapy  
[www.oncologynurseadvisor.com/web-exclusives/yoga-enhances-body-and-mind-during-radiotherapy/article/203586/](http://www.oncologynurseadvisor.com/web-exclusives/yoga-enhances-body-and-mind-during-radiotherapy/article/203586/)

**Young Survival Coalition** for breast cancer, website has multiple links to resources including audio archives from past conference presentations on body image, sex and intimacy, weight management  
[www.youngsurvival.org](http://www.youngsurvival.org)

## Collision barriers

### • Daily vaginal moisturizer

\*Poise<sup>®</sup>, Hyalafem<sup>®</sup>, Emerita<sup>®</sup>

\*Luvena<sup>®</sup>, pre-biotic lacto-peroxidase that inhibits candida and bacteria, use once infection cleared, can cause warm sensation not tolerated by some (not tested in *C. Glabrata*)

\*Neogyn<sup>®</sup>, burn cream made from cultured fetal fibroblasts, contains 100 cytokines, growth factors, interferons, and anti-inflammatory interleukins, studied in females with vulvar pain and lichen sclerosus

### • Collision barriers

\*ComeClose rings, made in UK

↳ Can be stacked to control depth of penetration, kind of heavy, flexible, not as smooth as picture suggests, lint magnet

\*Elastomer relaxed fit cockring

\*Masturbation sleeve

↳ Can be cut to right length, depending on how much penetration is comfortable, lint magnet

\*Bro sleeve 2.0





