

# INTIMACY - Physical or Emotional

Do you know the difference and why it matters?

- We may not all think of intimacy the same way, though we all want to feel an attachment or closeness to others. Physical intimacy is commonly referred to as sexual intimacy, but emotional intimacy is described to be something totally different... or is it?
- Emotional Intimacy is all about our emotional connection and attachment with others. It is a special connection at a deep level, but requires no physical contact. Emotional Intimacy can be enhanced by physical touch, but it can also be the motivator for sexual desire.

## SEXUAL SCRIPTS

Sexual scripts are the very personal ways we express intimacy and love. It is the how, what, when, where and why of your sexual relationship with your partner. Cancer can influence how we think about ourselves as sexual beings and our sexual scripts may need to change. Treatment can cause physical changes, affect how we feel about our bodies, or change our desire for sex. Spontaneity may not be possible for a while. Communicating with your partner about the changes you experience is a first step in rewriting your sexual scripts and feeling confident about being intimate with your partner again.



## RESOURCES

Sexual health care can involve many aspects of your well-being, including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

**Here are some resources and support to consider.**

(in alphabetical order)

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| • Counseling       | • Sex Therapy    |
| • Gynecology       | • Social Work    |
| • Ostomy Care      | • Spiritual      |
| • Physical Therapy | • Support Groups |



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## YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH AND CANCER

*“When they first told me I had cancer, sex was the last thing on my mind. But now I wonder, could getting help sooner have made a difference?”*

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Providing resources and educational programs for health care providers and patients





## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR



## ABOUT All of Me

All of Me- Prioritizing Sexual Health for Iowans Impacted by Cancer is a project originally funded by the Iowa Cancer Consortium.

Its aim is to improve quality of life by empowering patients and providers to address sexual health from the time of diagnosis through survivorship. Whether you have a partner or not, when you are an active participant in treatment choices that affect your sexual health, negative impacts of cancer and its treatment can be anticipated and addressed. You have the information you need to be in charge.

## COMMON PROBLEMS

Changes in energy level, body image, confidence and relationship roles may be experienced by anyone who has been impacted by cancer.

Other problems may be specific to males or females.

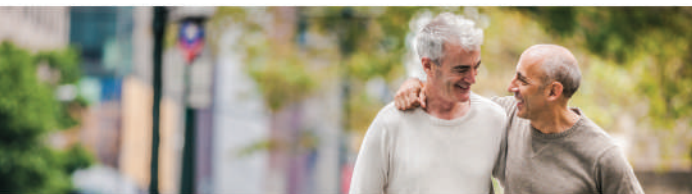
- Males may experience problems with erection, ejaculation or pain during sex / pain with sex.
- Females may experience vaginal dryness, decreased lubrication, changes in orgasm or pain during / pain with sex.

Some of these problems resolve after treatment has ended, while others may be long lasting or permanent.

Cancer therapy/treatment often has an effect on relationships causing partners to have their own needs for information and support.



- How will my cancer therapy and/or medications affect my sex life?
- Is it safe for me and my partner to have sex during cancer treatment?
- What can I do before, during or after my cancer treatment to lessen the negative impact on my sexual functioning?
- What can my partner expect from the long term side effects of my cancer treatment?
- What sexual health changes should I bring to the attention of my medical care team?
- What resources are available to address sexual health changes and the impact on my intimate relationships?



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