

# Information for patients and families



Niagara Health System  
Système De Santé De Niagara

Walker Family Cancer Centre

## Sexuality

### What You Need To Know and Why:

Cancer can affect many aspects of your life, including sexuality. After a diagnosis of cancer a person's first thoughts are on survival and dealing with cancer treatment. Depending on your treatment plan (surgery, chemotherapy, radiation or a combination) there will be adjustments to make as you recover. Sexuality and self-esteem are often low on this initial list of concerns.

Sexuality is an important part of our life. Sexual attitudes, preferences and practices vary widely. We require intimacy, affection and closeness with others throughout all stages of our lives.

### What you need to watch for:

Focus on your physical recovery first. Emphasize nutrition, rest and progressive activity. You have been through a lot and it may take time before you are interested in sex again. Be patient.

### What to do:

Honest partner-to-partner communication is essential to maintaining a strong, supportive relationship. When you feel ready, remember that self-concept and sexuality are linked, so emphasize the positive aspects of your appearance and personality. The pleasure of sexual closeness enhances quality of life and can be adapted to other methods besides intercourse.

It is important to avoid sexually transmitted infections during chemotherapy.

### Treatment:

- Conserve energy for sexual activities.
- Explore alternate ways of expressing intimacy
- For vaginal dryness use water soluble lubricants, i.e. K-Y jelly, Astroglide or Replens. Do NOT use Vaseline or other oil based lubricants because they can irritate the vagina
- Use prescribed pain medication as needed
- Use appropriate birth control measures.

### Information for Men Receiving Chemotherapy:

- During the two days after each chemotherapy treatment, you should wear a condom when you have sexual intercourse. If you do not wear a condom, your partner will have burning or irritation.

### Personal Notes / Reminders:

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