

SEXUALITY AND FERTILITY

■ Important information for you

Sexuality

Cancer can have an impact on your sexuality and may alter your priorities. Surgery, pain or the unwanted effects of the medication are all physical factors that may upset your intimate relations. In the same way, anxiety, certain treatments or changes to your body image may reduce your libido. The chemotherapy does not in itself reduce your sexual capacity or desire.

During chemotherapy the residue of the medicine is to be found in minute quantities in sperm or vaginal secretions up to 72 hours after administration, so it is important to use a condom during that time to protect your partner from direct contact with those substances.

Some advice

- ▶ Tell your doctor about any unusual symptoms in the genital area: discharge, irritation, pain etc.
- ▶ Talk with your partner so that he/she understands your difficulties.
- ▶ Use a water- or silicone-based lubricating gel without hormones to facilitate sexual relations in case of dryness or irritation.
- ▶ Explore alternative ways of experiencing sex and intimacy if penetration is difficult or impossible.
- ▶ Take care while having sex. At a time when your immune defences are low there is a greater risk of infection.



ALSO AVAILABLE

Specialists in sexual health and cancer are available at the HUG and the cancer care teams are aware of the subject.

The association Proasca offers support for men with prostate cancer.



INFO

During treatment you are recommended to use appropriate contraception as prescribed by your doctor. Even if the menstrual cycle is interrupted or the production of sperm diminished, there is still a risk of a child being conceived.

Fertility

Once an anti-cancer treatment has been decided on for the man or the woman, it is inadvisable for the couple to plan a pregnancy. Treatment can have side effects on the foetus.

For men

Certain forms of chemotherapy or radiotherapy reduce the number of spermatozoa and bring about a temporary decline in fertility or even male sterility. Your doctor will inform you of the possibilities of freezing a sperm sample before your treatment begins.

For women

Some chemotherapy or radiotherapy can temporarily or permanently reduce ovarian function. If you want to have a child or think you may want to later, it is important to discuss with your doctor the probable effects of your cancer and of its treatment on your fertility.

In some cases taking measures to preserve fertility (freezing the ova, in-vitro fertilization) can be envisaged before treatment is begun with a view to a subsequent pregnancy.

Chemotherapy can trigger early menopause with the appearance of the following customary symptoms: hot flashes, an irregular or non-existent menstrual cycle, dryness and changes to the vagina.

Do not hesitate to speak to your doctor about the choice of an appropriate treatment.

This card was translated by



SAVOIR

Ligue Suisse contre le cancer brochures *Cancer et sexualité au féminin* [Cancer and female sexuality] and *Cancer et sexualité au masculin* [Cancer and male sexuality].



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