

Changes in sensation and orgasm

What are changes in sensation and orgasm?

During or after cancer treatment, sexual touch may feel different than it did before. You may have less or different sensation, take longer to become aroused or reach orgasm, or notice that orgasms feel weaker or different. Some people may have difficulty reaching orgasm at all.

Changes in sensation and orgasm during and after cancer treatment are common. **You are not alone.** Support is available.

Why do these changes happen?

Cancer and its treatments can affect the body in different ways. These may include:

- Nerve changes (from surgery, chemotherapy or radiation) — reduced or different sensation
- Hormone changes — lower desire, dryness or erection changes
- Fatigue or pain — less energy for intimacy
- Emotional changes — anxiety, body image concerns or grief
- Medications — may delay or prevent orgasm

What you might notice

You might experience:

- Difficulty reaching orgasm
- Weaker or different-feeling orgasms
- Numbness or reduced sensation
- Pain or discomfort with touch or sex
- Lower desire or difficulty with arousal or erections

All of these are common. Many can improve over time.

Healing takes time

Changes in sensation and orgasm often improve slowly.

- Recovery can be gradual
- Small improvements matter
- Many people regain satisfying intimacy over time

Work with your body as it is now

Instead of trying to return to how things felt before, focus on what feels possible and comfortable now.

Helpful tips:

- Notice what types of touch feel neutral, pleasant or uncomfortable
- Take your time — arousal and sensation may take longer
- Accept that things may change from day to day
- Be curious and explore what feels good

Explore sensation gradually

Gentle exploration can help improve sensation over time. Regular blood flow to the genital area can support healing.

You might try:

- Gentle self-touch to help retrain nerve pathways
- Using vibration, hands or warmth (if comfortable)
- Short, regular sessions (often more helpful than longer ones)

Focus on comfort, not performance

Try to take the pressure off having an orgasm.

Focus on what feels good and comfortable. This can help create a more positive experience as your body changes and heals.

When to seek help

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- Changes are causing distress or concern
- You would like support or treatment options
- You have pain or discomfort with touch or intimacy

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/cca_sexualhealth for more sexual health information and trusted online resources.

