

Non-penetrative intimacy

What is non-penetrative intimacy?

Non-penetrative intimacy includes sexual or physical connection without penetration.

There may be times when intercourse is not possible or does not feel right. This can be due to physical, emotional or psychological reasons. It is okay to take intercourse off the table and explore other ways to feel close, connected and experience pleasure.

It is normal for sexual experiences to change during or after cancer treatment. There is no “right” way to be intimate.

Why this can help

Focusing on non-penetrative intimacy can:

- Reduce pressure or pain
- Support healing and comfort
- Help rebuild connection with yourself or a partner
- Create new ways to experience pleasure

What you can do to help

Start with communication

Talking openly can help create a safe and positive experience.

You may try:

- Sharing your needs, concerns and what you are comfortable with trying and what you are not comfortable with trying
- Talking about what feels good — and what does not
- Checking in with your partner during touch (for example, “How does this feel?”)
- Using positive feedback (for example, “I liked that”)

Make time for connection

Setting aside time can help reduce pressure and improve communication.

- Plan time together (for example, once a week)
- Use this time to talk, relax and explore
- Focus on being present rather than reaching a goal

Explore touch	Touch can help build comfort and connection. Ideas to try: • Massage (hands, back, feet or scalp) • Holding hands, hugging or lying together • Skin-to-skin contact Pay attention to what feels comfortable and enjoyable.
Sensual play	Sensual activities can help build arousal without pressure. You might try: • Kissing or making out • Gentle touching or caressing • Exploring areas of the body beyond the genitals • Showering or bathing together Try engaging your senses: • What feels good to touch? • What sights, sounds or smells help you feel relaxed or aroused?
Sexual activities without penetration	There are many ways to experience pleasure without intercourse. You might try: • Using your hands or mouth for genital touch • Mutual masturbation (together or side by side) • Using a vibrator on external areas • Grinding (with or without clothes — use lubricant if needed) You might be able to feel pleasure or have an orgasm without penetration.
Focus on what feels good	Try to focus on comfort and pleasure, not performance: • Do what feels good for you • Be present in your body and environment • Go at your own pace

When to seek help

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You feel unsure how to move forward
- Intimacy is causing stress or concern
- You would like more support or ideas

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

