

Pregnancy Prevention During Cancer Treatment

Why is pregnancy prevention important during cancer treatment?

Cancer treatments (like chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and radiation therapy) can damage sperm, eggs, and a developing baby. Always use birth control when there is a risk of pregnancy.

- Men or people who produce sperm should not get people pregnant during their cancer treatments.
- If you have a uterus, you should not get pregnant during cancer treatments. If you are between the ages of 12–55, we may need to test you for pregnancy during your treatments.



How can I prevent pregnancy?

Use birth control. Even if periods stop during cancer treatment, you can still get pregnant. Some birth control methods are more effective than others. Some types of birth control are prescribed by doctors. You can discuss the following birth control options with your cancer care team.

Types of Birth Control

Permanent	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Either partner can have a medical procedure to become sterile (unable to have children). These procedures are called:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vasectomy (cutting and sealing the tubes that carry sperm)• Bilateral tubal ligation (blocking both fallopian tubes)Do NOT use these methods if you want to have children in the future
Most Effective (not permanent)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Hormone birth control prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg (ovulation).<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examples include birth control pill, patch, shot, vaginal ring or implant. *Hormone birth control may not be a good option for some types of cancer treatments and hormone sensitive cancers, as well as some pre-existing health conditions. Some medications (like for nausea) make hormonal birth control less effective and require you to use a back up method. Talk to your cancer specialist if you are taking hormone birth control.3. Intrauterine devices (IUDs) prevent the sperm from meeting an egg (fertilization).<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some IUDs also use hormones.

Less Effective	<p>4. Barrier methods prevent the sperm from meeting an egg (fertilization).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples include condoms (external and internal), diaphragms, cervical caps, and vaginal sponges. <p>*There may be some medication in vaginal fluid and semen for up to 48 hours after a chemotherapy treatment, so use a condom to keep you and your partner safe.</p> <p>5. Spermicide cream, gel or foam work by blocking the cervix and slowing sperm down to make it hard to swim to an egg.</p> <p>*Do not use spermicide on it's own. Using spermicide with a condom, diaphragm or vaginal sponge makes this birth control more effective.</p>
Not Recommended	<p>1. Fertility awareness methods that guess which days you are most likely to get pregnant during the menstrual cycle, and include the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature method (tracking daily body temperature) • Calendar method (tracking a menstrual cycle on a calendar) <p>2. Pulling the penis out of the vagina before ejaculation ("withdrawal" or "the pull out method").</p>

Can someone get pregnant if they are breastfeeding?

You can still get pregnant while breastfeeding.

What if we might be pregnant?

Tell your cancer care team.

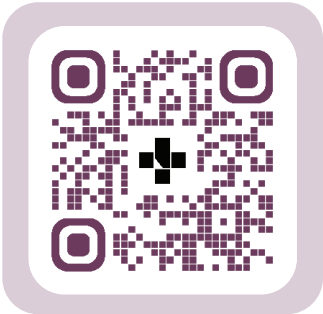


How long after treatment do I need to prevent getting pregnant?

It depends on your type of cancer treatment. Ask your cancer specialist when it is safe to get pregnant. Continue to use birth control for a few weeks after cancer treatment has finished.

Can cancer treatments affect my ability to have children?

Yes they can. If you have questions about how cancer treatments can affect your ability to have children in the future, read “Fertility and You” (scan the QR code to go to the resource). You can also talk to your cancer care team.



For other Cancer Care Alberta resources, visit cancercarealberta.ca

