

Safe sex during cancer treatment

Can I still have sex and be intimate during cancer treatment?

Yes. Many people continue to want and enjoy intimacy during cancer treatment. With a few precautions, physical and emotional closeness can remain a healthy and important part of life, unless your healthcare team has told you otherwise.

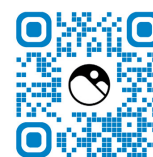
How long do cancer medicines stay in the body?

Most cancer medicines (such as chemotherapy) leave the body within about 48 hours (2 days). Cancer medicines are passed from the body through fluids like pee, poop, vomit, semen and vaginal fluid.

During treatment and for 48 hours (2 days) afterward, small amounts of medication may be present in these body fluids.

Some medicines may stay in the body longer. Your healthcare team will let you know if extra precautions are needed.

If you are taking cancer medicines daily, these precautions may be needed throughout treatment and for 48 hours (2 days) after you finish your treatment.



To learn more about managing hazardous bodily fluids at home, scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/haz-meds

Is it safe to be close to others?

Yes. Spending time with loved ones is safe and encouraged. You can:

- Eat together
- Hug or cuddle
- Kiss lightly

To reduce exposure to body fluids, avoid open-mouth or deep kissing during treatment and for 48 hours (2 days) after treatment.

Is it safe to be sexually active?

In most cases, yes. Some cancer medicines may be present in body fluids for 48 hours (2 days) after treatment.

To help protect your partner, it is recommended:

- Use barrier protection (such as condoms or dental dams) for vaginal, anal or oral sex during treatment and for at least 48 hours (2 days) after treatment
- Use barrier protection longer if you were told to by your healthcare team

Pregnancy prevention

Avoid getting pregnant or making your partner pregnant during treatment. To reduce risk:

- Use reliable birth control, even if fertility may be affected
- Talk to your healthcare team about safe options

If you choose genital contact

These steps can help protect your partner:

- Use condoms for penetrative sex
- Use dental dams for oral–genital contact
- Use gloves for manual penetration if there are cuts or irritation
- Use condoms on shared sex toys and clean them after use
- Wash your hands before and after sex
- Pee after sex to reduce infection risk
- Use lots of lubricant (water-based or silicone-based) as cancer treatment can cause dryness
- Be gentle, especially if you or your partner is receiving treatment

When to avoid sex

It is okay to not want to have sex during treatment or if you don't feel up to it. Only do what feels right for you. Do not have sex if you have:

- Pain during sex
- Open sores, irritation or broken skin
- Mouth sores (avoid oral sex)

Talk to your healthcare provider before having sex if you have:

- Fever or signs of infection
- Low white blood cell counts
- Low platelet counts or bleeding
- Been told to wait to have sex

If sex hurts, stop. Talk to your healthcare provider — pain should not be ignored.

Communication matters

Talking openly can help reduce stress and improve connection. You might try:

- Sharing what feels comfortable for you and how much energy you have
- Talking about what you like, what you don't like and what feels okay or not okay
- Checking in during intimacy (for example, “How does this feel?”)

When to seek help

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You have questions about safety
- You feel unsure about what is safe
- You are experiencing pain or distress
- You would like support or guidance

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

