

# SaferSex4Seniors

Information you need to enjoy safer sexual pleasure!

## Lighting the Spark When You Have Prostate Cancer

### **Q. I can't get erections. Does that mean I will never have sex again?**

The quality of your erections may not be the same after treatment for prostate cancer, but that doesn't mean that you can't enjoy penetrative sex. There are many options to help the firmness: medication, pumps, injections and implants. It is also important to realize that sex can be about more than penetration. Learning different techniques to pleasure your partner may be just as enjoyable. The art of sensate focus, improving upon your oral sex techniques, or mutual masturbation may bring a lot of pleasure. A sex therapist can help you learn with these techniques.

### **Q. Since my treatment for prostate cancer, I have lost my interest in sex. Why?**

Some of the hormone treatments used to fight prostate cancer can interrupt one's desire for sex. If you have a partner, it is important to discuss this side effect. You may find it helpful to have scheduled sexual activity to encourage closeness and intimacy. Sometimes, interest in sex builds when people engage in more sex play. You can foster closer bonds with your partner simply by having naked time in bed while reading, watching TV, or sleeping together.

### **Q: How can I add the spark back in my relationship?**

Treat your relationship like a courtship again. Go on dates, discover new activities together, and enjoy your partner's company. These new activities will refresh your relationship and your perspective. Try to remember what it was like to lust after your partner with anticipation. Kissing, touching, holding hands, and playful suggestions are ways to make a relationship feel alive and new again.

### **Q: How can I date when I have sexual problems after prostate cancer?**

Companionship is very important for many people, and having a diagnosis of prostate cancer shouldn't stop you from dating. Deciding when to disclose your medical condition can be challenging. Don't over-disclose on a first date. Make sure the person you are dating is someone you want to spend more time with before sharing your medical history. Realize that everyone comes into a relationship with "baggage." Try to not be discouraged if a potential partner rejects you based on your health status. You may find reasons to reject that person before ever having to disclose your own personal information.

### **Q: Will my sexual function ever return to what it once was?**

This is a tricky question. Sometimes, one's recollection of pre-treatment functioning is inaccurate. Many men grieve the function they had in their youth, forgetting that even without cancer, their level of function would likely change as they age. In either case, if you are going through proper rehabilitation starting immediately after treatment, you will have a greater chance of regaining most of your sexual function. Depending on the long term treatment plan you and your doctor choose, you may find you need assistance through medications, pumps, injections, implants, or creativity.

**Author bio: Melissa Donahue, LCSW, CST** works with individuals and couples through the New Jersey Center for Sexual Wellness <http://www.njsexualwellness.com> and her private practice, MD Counseling, LLC <http://www.md-counseling.com>. She is an AASECT-Certified Sex Therapist and Certified Oncology Social Worker with a certificate in gerontological social work.