

Sexual Health During and After Cancer Treatment (Female)

We ask you to take special precautions when having sex while receiving these cancer treatments:

- Chemotherapy
- Biotherapy
- Targeted therapies
- Blood stem cell transplant
- Radiation therapy.

Pregnancy Prevention

We ask you to avoid getting pregnant while receiving treatment for cancer. Before starting and while receiving treatment, your doctor or nurse will ask if you could be pregnant. A pregnancy test will be done before you start treatment. Talk with your doctor about the birth control method you plan to use to prevent pregnancy.

Chemotherapy has risks to the fetus including:

- Slow fetal growth during pregnancy
- Low blood counts in fetus
- Premature birth
- Fetal defects or death

It may harm the baby if you get pregnant too soon after the end of treatment. We would advise speaking to a fertility specialist if you and your partner have questions about your fertility and having children in the future.

Protection of Self

Use a condom when having sex to decrease the risk of a sexually transmitted disease. If your platelet count or white blood cell count is low, avoid all sexual activities until your blood counts are normal. Low white blood counts increase your risk of infection. Low platelet counts increase your risk for excess bleeding and bruising that may occur during sexual activity. Avoid oral and anal sex while receiving cancer treatment due to risk of infection.

Protection of Partner

Chemotherapy, biotherapy and targeted therapy are present in your saliva, urine, stool, blood, and vaginal fluids for at least 48 hours after your last treatment. Protect your partner from being exposed to these bodily fluids during oral, vaginal, and anal sex. A condom may provide some protection. Avoiding all sexual activity, even open mouth kissing, is the only sure way to protect your partner. **It is safe for you and your partner to share signs of affection and support during your cancer treatment, such as touching, hugging and closed mouth kissing.**

If you have any questions about your sexual health during and after cancer treatment, ask your doctor or nurse.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©11/2017. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7874.