



# Intimate Relationships

Sex can be challenging for people with multiple myeloma (MM). The cancer and its treatment can make it hard for both men and women to have a satisfying sex life. But there are steps you and your partner can take to stay intimate.

## WHY IT'S HELPFUL

Sex and intimacy are important to your well-being. It's important to know that your healthcare team can help you with sexual problems related to cancer.

## KEY POINTS

1. MM and its treatment can make it difficult for both men and women to have a satisfying sex life
2. Solutions, depending on your medical circumstances, may include medication or working with a therapist
3. Communication is key; it's important to tell your partner how you feel and to talk to your doctor and nurse about it too

## CANCER AND SEXUAL PROBLEMS

Cancer and its treatment may affect how you feel about sex. People with MM may:

- Have bone pain that makes sex difficult to enjoy
- Have weak bones and a fear of being touched
- Be too weak or too tired for sex

Treatment side effects can also interfere with sex. These may result in a lessened desire for intimacy or changes to overall mood. Another possible side effect is erectile dysfunction in men, while women may have pain or dryness during sex.

Although it can be hard to talk about sex, it's important to tell your partner how you feel. Talk to your doctor and nurse too. They may be able to help you manage the issues causing your sexual problems, or refer you to a counselor who can help bring more satisfaction to your sex life.

## PREGNANCY AND CANCER

Cancer and its treatments can sometimes cause infertility or serious birth defects. If you are starting a family, you should talk to your doctor about your treatment. Even if you are not pregnant or planning to get pregnant, safety measures may need to be taken to prevent pregnancy or to protect an unborn baby from harm.

## CAN INTIMACY BE RESTORED?

Sexual challenges for women and men caused by MM and its treatment may be helped with a combination of approaches that consider medical, relationship, and emotional needs.



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Solutions, depending on your medical circumstances, may include medication or working with a therapist who specializes in sexual and relationship issues—or a combination of both.

Intimacy is about more than sex. It's about being emotionally close, letting your guard down, and sharing how you really feel.

## TAKING CHARGE

Sex and intimacy are important to your well-being. Talk to your doctor if you or your partner are having any of the problems listed below:

- No interest in sex
- Unable to enjoy sex
- Discomfort or pain during sex (vaginal dryness)
- Erectile dysfunction

Asking a question may make it easier to talk to your doctor or nurse. Here are some questions you can ask:

- Is it safe to have sex while I am taking these medicines?
- Should I avoid pregnancy?
- Can MM cause sexual problems?
- Could my treatments or their side effects cause sexual problems?

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