

# Navigating intimacy and the emotional impacts of gynaecologic cancer

A diagnosis of gynaecologic cancer, such as endometrial cancer (sometimes referred to as “womb” or “uterine” cancer) or ovarian cancer, and treatment can bring profound changes to your body and life. While discussions with your healthcare team often focus on symptoms and treatment plans, deeply personal topics like sexual health, emotional well-being and menopausal symptoms may be overlooked. This guide aims to provide helpful information so that you can confidently initiate these important conversations with your care team.

A multi-national survey\* of 818 individuals with gynaecologic cancer revealed that only about half felt comfortable discussing how cancer impacts their sexual function with their care team.

“One of the big challenges as a patient is having the time to talk about the more difficult topics. It’s having the courage to feel empowered to have these conversations and to feel comfortable doing it.”

-Helen White, patient advocate with lived experience of endometrial cancer



## Physical and emotional symptoms

Changes related to gynaecologic cancer and treatments can impact body image, sexual desire and physical comfort during intimacy. These experiences are common and there are often ways to help manage them.

You may experience...



Changes in libido



Vaginal dryness



Pain or discomfort during intimacy



Fatigue



Difficulty with arousal or orgasm

You may feel...



Insecure about your body image



Concerned about when it is safe to resume sexual activity after treatment



Anxious



Fearful



Depressed



Mood changes

You can talk to your healthcare team about any new or worsening symptoms at any time. They are trained to help with sexual health topics and may be able to prescribe medicine or make other treatment recommendations that can help. Some symptoms may have solutions that are more easily accessible. For example, over-the-counter moisturisers or lubricants can help alleviate vaginal dryness or discomfort during sex. However, other symptoms may require additional care. Your sexual wellness is an important part of your quality of life and overall well-being and should not be overlooked.

Your healthcare team may also be able to provide recommendations for therapists, counsellors or other professionals who specialise in sexual health for people with gynaecologic cancer.

\* GSK Your Cancer Is Our Challenge (YCIOC) Survey, conducted online by The Harris Poll in March-May 2024. Available at: <https://www.gsk.com/en-gb/behind-the-science-magazine/gynaecologic-cancer-survey-treatment-access/>. Last accessed: November 2025.



Material provided by GSK

Material was developed in collaboration with advisory committee consisting of patients, advocates and healthcare providers.

## Treatment-induced menopause

Some treatments for endometrial and ovarian cancer can bring on or worsen menopause symptoms, sometimes suddenly and intensely. This type of menopause can be temporary or permanent. This is known as treatment-induced menopause, which can happen well before your body's natural progression to menopause. The symptoms of treatment-induced menopause are similar to those of natural menopause, but they may start much more suddenly. For some individuals, this could impact fertility.

Talk to your healthcare team if you experience any of these symptoms, since they may be able to recommend certain lifestyle changes, medicines or other approaches to help alleviate discomfort.

### You may experience...



Hot flashes



Night sweats



For individuals who are pre-menopausal and who have not undergone a hysterectomy, changes in the regularity and flow of their menstrual cycle



Pain during sexual intercourse



Incontinence



Sleep disturbances or insomnia



Mood changes



Impacts to fertility

## Tips for talking to your care team about these topics

- Remember that your care team is here to help you. They can help direct you to the right resources.
- Bring a trusted friend or loved one with you to your appointment to help empower you in your discussion.
- Ask your care team if you can share your questions ahead of time.
- Find someone on your care team (e.g., your oncologist, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, social worker, etc.), who you trust to have these conversations with, and ask for their help facilitating these discussions.

## Questions you may wish to ask your care team

### Sexual health and intimacy

- How will my cancer affect my desire for intimacy and how can I talk to my partner about how I am feeling?
- What symptoms should I expect regarding sex? What is considered "abnormal" and when should I contact you?
- Will my treatment impact my ability to have sex? When can I start having sex again?
- What can I do to make intimacy more enjoyable?
- Cancer and/or treatments have affected how I feel about my appearance. Are there resources that can help me work through these feelings so I can feel more confident in intimate settings?
- Can you recommend a therapist or counsellor specialising in sexual health and cancer care?

### Menopause and fertility

- What options or lifestyle choices should I consider to help relieve my menopause symptoms?
- How will my current treatment plan bring on or worsen menopause?
- How long will my menopause symptoms last?
- How much time do I have to pursue fertility preservation options and what is the level of urgency for doing this with optimal outcomes — for treating the cancer and trying to preserve my fertility?
- Can you recommend a specialist who can discuss family planning options with me?

## Important reminders for your appointment



Keep track of your questions, concerns and thoughts to share with your healthcare team so they can help address them.



Feeling vulnerable in this situation is totally normal. It can help to remember that your care team is there to support your whole health, including your physical, sexual, mental and emotional well-being.



You are your own best advocate. Don't hesitate to speak up about your concerns.

## Notes

Hormones, symptoms and your mood can change from day-to-day and it's important to track any changes so you can mention them at your next appointment. Use this space to keep track of anything you'd like to discuss with your healthcare team related to sexual health, intimacy and menopause.

How am I feeling physically?

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How am I feeling emotionally?

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Questions for my care team

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For more information, please visit [yourcancerourchallenge.com](https://yourcancerourchallenge.com)