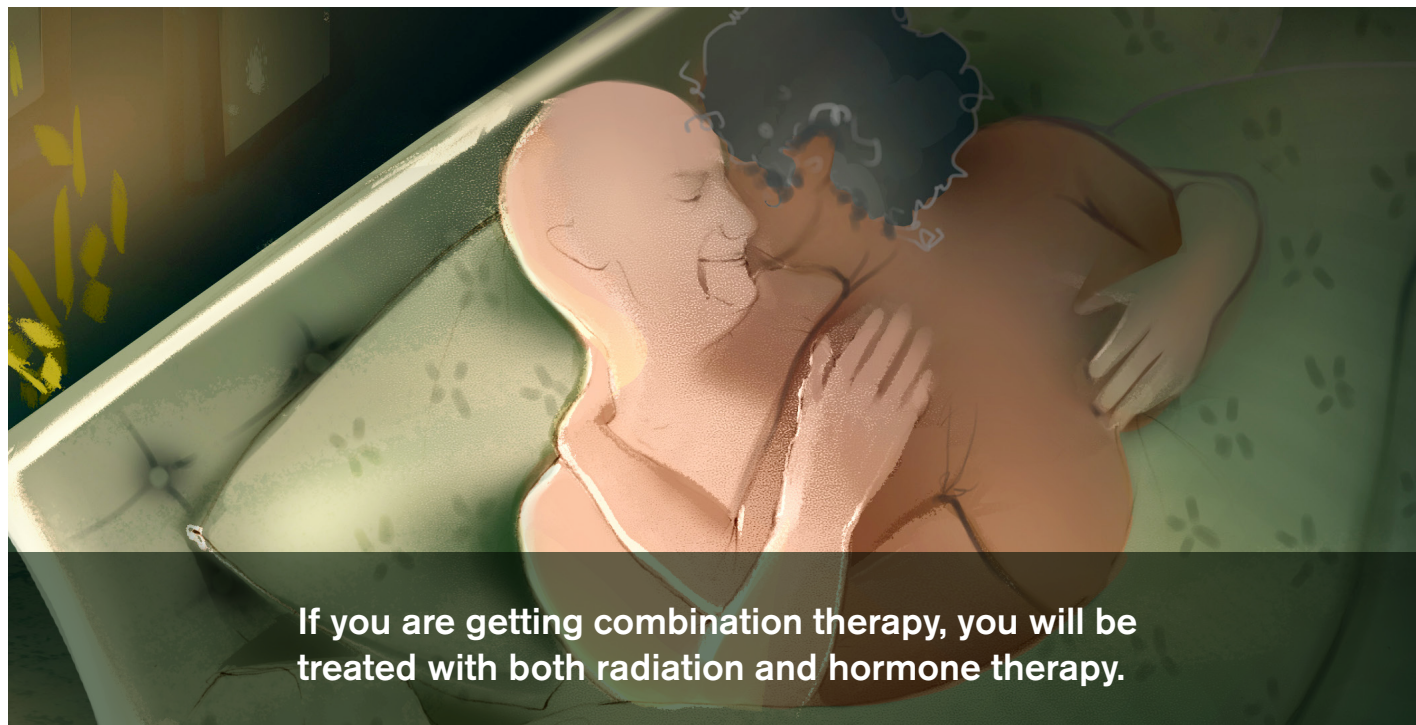


About Your Prostate Cancer Treatment

Combination Therapy



If you are getting combination therapy, you will be treated with both radiation and hormone therapy.

How will combination therapy affect your sex life?

Every kind of prostate cancer treatment causes changes to sexual function. Here are some ways combination therapy may affect your sex life:

Radiation destroys cancer cells by targeting them with strong and focused energy. There are different kinds of radiation:

External beam radiation – a beam of radiation will be aimed at your prostate from the outside of your body.

Internal seed radiation (brachytherapy) – radiation seeds are put into your prostate to destroy the cancer. Radioactivity is temporary, but the seeds stay inside your prostate permanently.

Hormone therapy, also called Androgen Deprivation Therapy (ADT), works by blocking testosterone, a hormone that is thought to help cancer grow. By blocking testosterone, the cancer growth can be slowed.

Problems with erections (Erectile dysfunction / ED)

- Both radiation and hormone treatment may cause problems with erections.
- Hormone therapy will impact erections sooner than radiation therapy.
- ED usually starts within six weeks of starting hormone treatment.
- If you have to stay on hormone therapy long-term, ED may be permanent.
- If your therapy is short-term, you may see recovery of erections about six months after stopping treatment.

Lower sex drive

- Radiation treatment often causes temporary tiredness, which may lower your energy for sexual activity.
- Immediately after starting hormone therapy, many men feel a loss of energy and sense of fatigue. This can impact interest and energy for sexual activity.
- Sex drive is also lowered because of the loss of testosterone. After hormone treatments, testosterone does start to come back, though it may take several months, and sometimes longer.
- Some men may not get back to a normal testosterone level even after stopping hormone therapy, and their sex drive may stay lower.



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About Your Prostate Cancer Treatment: Combination Therapy

Changes in sensitivity and orgasm

- Lower testosterone makes it harder for some men to reach orgasm.
- Some men experience loss of sensitivity of the penis after radiation treatment which can also affect orgasm.
- For some men, orgasms are also less intense.
- When you reach orgasm, less semen will come out.

Problems with leaking urine during sex

Some men leak urine during arousal, intercourse, or orgasm. Some men feel embarrassed by it, but you can work through these emotions.

- Urine is a normal body fluid, just like ejaculate, sweat or saliva. It won't hurt you or your partner, even if it comes out during penetration, unless your partner has a history of recurrent infections. Using a condom will create a safe barrier.
- If you can, work on accepting this as a minor nuisance.
- You can disguise urine by using lubricant to moisturize the penis during sexual activity.
- You can also use condoms to contain the leakage.

Possible change in fertility

- Radiation treatment may affect your fertility. If you might want to father a child in the future, please discuss this with your healthcare provider.

Genital shrinkage

- When your hormone levels decrease, you may notice that your testicles or penis get smaller.

Emotional changes

- Low testosterone due to hormonal therapy can cause mood swings and irritability. Over time, this can stabilize.
- Many men also feel emotional because of all the sexual changes. Sometimes it is difficult to know whether being emotional is caused by the treatment, the cancer, or the changes that treatment has brought about.

What can you do about the sexual side effects?

- Your doctor can prescribe medications or devices to help you have erections.
- Exercising regularly to strengthen your muscles and bones helps keep you strong and in touch with your body. It can also help with your mood.
- Talking can help. Talk to your partner, a family member, someone who has been through this treatment, or to a friend you trust.
- If you feel you are not coping well, a counselor can help sort out your feelings and find strategies for coping.
- A certified sex therapist can help you and your partner, if you have one, find a way to stay sexually active. In the US, you can find a certified sex therapist near you through the website for the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists – aasect.org.

