

Between the Sheets...

January 2020

This column provides the platform for experts in the field to help men and women by providing answers to questions about sexual health and intimacy challenges that can result from prostate cancer treatment.

This column was compiled with the help of Dr. Jeffrey Albaugh, Director of Sexual Health at NorthShore University HealthSystem and at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, IL. Dr. Albaugh is a funded researcher, a board certified advanced practice urology clinical nurse specialist, and a board certified sexuality counselor. In addition to his many publications in peer reviewed journals and chapters in books on sexual dysfunction, Dr. Albaugh published *Reclaiming Sex and Intimacy After Prostate Cancer Treatment*. He has been quoted in media and publications as an expert in the treatment of sexual dysfunction, and is a member of the Us TOO Board of Directors.

QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:

My wife and I are trying to enjoy sex without any erections and she also has some issues that make vaginal penetration uncomfortable, can you explain about "outercourse"?

RESPONSE FROM DR. JEFFREY ALBAUGH:

If vaginal penetration and/or intercourse is a problem because of issues for men with erectile dysfunction or women with vaginal atrophy (shrinkage and dryness) or pain, many couples will choose to have "outercourse" or non-penetrative sex. For many couples, the goals of sex are about feeling a deeper connection with each other, pleasure and/or orgasms together. These goals can be accomplished with or without a hard erection. In men, the primary area of sexual pleasure is the penis and in women the primary area of sexual pleasure is the clitoris. There may also be other places on a person's body that are sources of sexual pleasure and it can be very enjoyable to explore and find any and all areas that, when stimulated, provide pleasure.

In terms of genital stimulation, oral (using the mouth on genitals), manual (using hands or rubbing genitals against each other, for example) or vibratory stimulation (vibration applied to various areas of the genitalia) can be effective. It should be fun to explore all options and can help to be creative with each other. Kissing can build intimacy and can be very enjoyable for many people. Kissing on the lips or other parts of the body can help partners discover what feels good and what is arousing. You can use massage to explore all parts of the body as well. Each person may vary in how deep or light of massage or rubbing they may enjoy. It can also be fun to explore various lubricants with massage. You may also like including your partner in self touch. The biofeedback between your hands and your brain make you the expert on what feels good and how to become aroused. There are a myriad of sexual aids including, but not limited to, vibrators. Applying these aids to various spots on you or your partner's body could be arousing and enjoyable for both of you. Rubbing genitals together or against each other can also be exciting for some people. Cuddling together with extensive body contact is another thing that may increase intimacy and/or arousal. The possibilities are pretty limitless and dependent on what you both enjoy. Sometimes society has programmed us to believe that sex means one way of doing things with foreplay, penetration/intercourse, and orgasm, but there are many ways to have sexual pleasure with a partner. Exploring the options outside of intercourse can be wonderful and exciting and a fun way to try new things together. I have discovered in my work and research that many men and women find it can lead to deeper intimacy and pleasure.

You can access the new edition of my book or download a free copy of my original book at www.drjeffalbaugh.com.

Watch Dr. Albaugh's presentation on sexual health and intimacy from the *Prostate Cancer Pathways for Patients and Caregivers* event recorded at NorthShore University HealthSystem in Skokie, IL on November 3, 2018 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hiq0dDEb1l0&t=4483s>.

Read previous issues of *Between the Sheets* at www.ustoo.org/BTS.

Do you have a question about sexual health or intimacy? If so, we invite you to send it to Us TOO. We'll select questions to feature in future *Between the Sheets* columns.

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Us TOO International
Between the Sheets
2720 S. River Road, Suite 112
Des Plaines, IL 0018

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