

## Between the Sheets...

October 2019

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. Anne Katz, Certified Sexuality Counselor and Clinical Nurse Specialist at CancerCare Manitoba. She has educated thousands of healthcare providers and cancer survivors about cancer, sexuality and survivorship. She is the editor of the Oncology Nursing Forum, an avid blogger for ASCO Connections, and the author of 13 books on the topics of illness, sexuality and cancer survivorship. ([www.drannekatz.com](http://www.drannekatz.com))

### QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:

*I'm 71 years old and finished radiation therapy about six months ago. All went well and I am told that I have no evidence of disease. I do need to have nine months of hormone injections and, while I don't really want to do this, I feel that I have to do what the doctors have recommended.*

*My wife died ten years ago from breast cancer and, after a long period of grief (she was the best wife any man could have), I started dating someone my age shortly before being diagnosed. My 'friend' and I had a brief period of intense sexual connection and then came the diagnosis and treatment. We held off on sex while I was having the radiation, but now I would like to get things going again. The problem is that I have very little feeling in my genitals. It makes no difference if it's me alone or with my friend. Things down there just have no feeling at all. Is this normal?*

### RESPONSE FROM DR. ANNE KATZ:

*Androgen deprivation therapy (what is often called hormone therapy) is most likely the culprit here. It is well known that the lack of testosterone, as a result of the injections often prescribed along with radiation therapy, causes decreased genital sensitivity as you have described. Things may go back to normal when the nine months of treatment is over – but remember that the return to normal can take months.*

*So what can you do to help the situation? First, don't give up! It's wonderful that you have found a new relationship after an extended period of grief. It's also great that despite the lack of testosterone you have retained sexual interest (roughly 10 – 15% of men do). What may help is to use a vibrator. Yes, the subject of jokes on TV and among teenage boys (and maybe girls too) provides INTENSE and DIRECT stimulation to the genitals of both men and women (your friend may enjoy this as well so you are getting a 'twofer'!). This is a time and energy saver for many couples, as it provides stimulation and sensation in a way that the human hand cannot. For men, the vibrator can be used anywhere on the penis or testicles. There are many reliable brands available online – [www.LELO.com](http://www.LELO.com) have some beautiful examples that are as nice to look at as they are convenient to use (charge with a USB port and quiet as a whisper).*

Watch Dr. Katz' presentation on sexual health and intimacy from the Prostate Cancer Pathways for Patients and Caregivers event recorded at Englewood Health in Englewood, NJ on September 29, 2018.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2ZdDHw2WGY&t=8542s>.

Read previous issues of *Between the Sheets* at [www.ustoo.org/BTS](http://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.

**Please email your question to: [ustooBTS@ustoo.org](mailto:ustooBTS@ustoo.org)**

**Or mail your letter to:**

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