

Between the Sheets...

August 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)

QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:

Since going on hormone therapy I have gained a lot of weight. I don't know what to do about this – I have tried dieting and the weight won't budge. I have had to buy new clothes and I can't wear polo shirts anymore because of my bulging stomach; I look terrible in everything. I know that men aren't supposed to bother about this, but I do and it's costing me a lot of money!

RESPONSE FROM DR. ANNE KATZ:

Weight gain is one of the more distressing side effects of androgen deprivation therapy (what is commonly called "hormone therapy"). The weight gain tends to be around the abdominal area and is often called the "spare tire." It is VERY bothersome for many men and, yes, costly too when you have to "size up" and buy a new wardrobe. And men DO care about how they look, so you are allowed to be frustrated by this.

Unfortunately most diets don't seem to work to shift this weight gain but it is VERY important that you eat a "heart healthy" diet to prevent the development or worsening of diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease. The CDC has resources to inform and educate about this. They can be found on their website at <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/resources/factsheets.html>.

The other important thing that you MUST do while on this treatment is to get both resistance AND aerobic exercise. Resistance exercise can be done with free weights or resistance bands, or even large tin cans! Aerobic exercise needs to be weight bearing, like walking at a moderate to fast pace. You should also be taking calcium and Vitamin D supplements as prescribed by your health care provider(s).

And, of course, this can affect your sexual relationship. Some men feel embarrassed about undressing in front of their partner and additional weight around your 'middle' may make intercourse challenging. You and your partner may have to think about different positions for intercourse as well. Coupled with the loss of upper body strength, intercourse in the man on top position may be more tiring for you. It is VERY important to talk to your sexual partner about this as they may not know how this weight gain is affecting you and may blame themselves if you start to withdraw emotionally or sexually.

If you are able to go off the medication, even for a "drug holiday," you may find that some of the weight does come off with adherence to a heart healthy diet.

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.

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

Or mail your letter to:

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