

Between the Sheets...

March 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:

I'm 68, and have undergone laparoscopic surgery in 2007. I have bladder control 99% of the time. I do not have erections you can count on for sexual function. I was divorced (not for this reason) shortly after the surgery. Alone, a 56 yr. old man does not get terribly excited, and I told myself this was why "my old friend" did not work. I've done some work with a therapist who used injections. This was a horrible experience with hardness that actually hurt! In 2015 I met and married a woman who just makes things work for us both. The importance of having a partner to work with is so great, and being single for most of the first three years, I had to wonder if there could possibly be some form of sexual therapy other than prostitution a man in my situation could find, AND afford? However when I was alone, I discovered a trick. By tying a soft cord at the base of my penis, below and including the scrotum, my erection was dependable enough to have sex.

Question #1: Is this something new?

Question #2: Is this something that other men might take advantage of?

Question #3: Am I alone in finding that "therapy" after surgery is not something doctors routinely offer?

RESPONSE FROM DR. ANNE KATZ:

I am happy that you have found someone to share your life with. In answer to your questions about using what we call a "constriction device" to maintain an erection...

A1: This is not something new. Men can use all sorts of constricting devices (soft cord, constriction ring, leather band etc.) for this purpose. It is often called a "cock ring" in lay language.

A2: Yes, of course other men can try this – and many have!

Q3: It depends what you mean by "therapy." Healthcare providers have specific skill sets; urologists are surgeons and the "therapy" they offer is in the surgical area. Urologists tend to offer pills and injections for erectile problems because this is what they have been trained to do. Sex therapists and counselors view things from a more holistic perspective and are skilled in communication, etc. The key is to find a professional who can provide you the help you need. There is no "one size fits all" approach to the complex issue of male sexuality.

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2ZdDHw2WGY&t=8542s>

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:

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

Pssst!
Check out our
feature on sex and intimacy,
Between the Sheets...