

Between the Sheets...

September 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:

I feel very fortunate to be free from cancer after my surgery. I hate to admit it, but the erectile dysfunction really messes with my mind. I didn't think it would bother me as much as it does, but I don't feel like the man I was anymore. Do you have any advice for me?

RESPONSE FROM DR. JEFFREY ALBAUGH:

You are not alone in your feelings or struggles. I have seen and spoken to literally thousands of men after prostate cancer treatment who have many mixed feelings about dealing with erectile dysfunction. It is wonderful to be cancer free and that is good news for you. Erectile dysfunction is still frustrating and it can impact your psychological well-being. It is not unusual to feel depression, anxiety, frustration, irritability and struggles in your relationship. It can be helpful to talk to a mental healthcare professional and I often give a list of local providers in my area who have expertise in relationship and sexual issues to my patients (I, myself, am a certified sexuality counselor with training in couples therapy, in addition to being board certified in urology). There is information and resources on anxiety and depression with prostate cancer on the Us TOO website at www.ustoo.org/anxiety-and-depression. After prostate cancer treatment, the changes in sexual function may negatively impact your self-image and your psychological well-being.

There are many resources for men struggling with various psychological problems like depression, anxiety and/or relationship issues. It can be helpful to talk to your urology healthcare provider to see if they have mental health colleagues that might help you, or information on mental healthcare professionals in the area. It can really help to work with a trained healthcare professional. If you are struggling with relationship, intimacy or sexual issues you can go to www.aasect.org/referral-directory to find expert counselors and therapists across the country. You can also participate in a prostate cancer support group to talk to other men struggling with similar problems, and virtual support is available through www.ustoo.org/pdfs/Virtual_Support_Group_List.pdf, www.inspire.com/groups/us-too-prostate-cancer, or www.ancan.org/prostate-cancer. Your partner can participate in a support group through www.ustoo.org/aforumforher.

Erectile dysfunction can be frustrating and upsetting. It can help to talk to other people as you continue to navigate your way through erectile dysfunction. It can also help to work with your urology healthcare team to design the best erectile dysfunction treatment plan for you.

All erectile dysfunction treatments have pros and cons and these are laid out for you in the book I wrote for men with prostate cancer and their partners "Reclaiming Sex & Intimacy After Prostate Cancer, 2nd Edition," which can be downloaded for free at my website: 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=Hiq0dDEb1I0&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.

Please email your question to: ustooBTS@ustoo.org

Or mail your letter to:

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feature on sex and intimacy,
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