

Accessing Support: Sexual difficulties and fertility

A cancer diagnosis and side effects of treatment often impact people's sex lives and fertility. It can be helpful to learn more about these issues, how others have coped with similar situations, and the resources that are available to support you in going through this. Please be aware that you do not need to be in a relationship or having sex to have questions or need support around sexual or fertility concerns.



Below is a list of organisations who may be able to offer you some support, as well as some resources that you may find helpful to read/listen to. The range and quality of services/support available from such organisations may vary. This list has been gathered as signposting only, and The Royal Marsden cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided by an organisation listed or the quality of their services.

If you have any questions or would like further advice/guidance about where to seek specialist help in your local area, you can speak with a member of your Royal Marsden treatment team or the Adult Psychological Support Service.

"Body Image and Self Esteem After Breast Cancer" information website by the Irish Cancer Society

This website explores what body image is and how breast cancer can impact it. There are links to various other support and information sites for confronting body image issues including: managing sexual relationships, fertility, and considering breast reconstruction.

Website link: <https://www.cancer.ie/cancer-information-and-support/cancer-types/breast-cancer/after-treatment/body-image-and-self-esteem>

Breast Cancer Now's "Your body, intimacy, and sex"

This first half of this booklet focuses on the psychological effect of breast cancer on sexuality. It then moves on to advice on regaining intimacy with a partner including managing the new emotional and physical barriers which may be affecting sexual contact.

Website link: <https://breastcancernow.org/information-support/publication/your-body-intimacy-sex-bcc110>



College of Sexual Relationship Therapists (COSRT)

A UK-only professional body for psychosexual and relationship therapists. The website provides a list of registered therapists who are local to you and runs online events and training for members and non-members.

Website link: <https://www.cosrt.org.uk/>

Enhance the UK – Love Lounge

Enhance The UK is a user-led charity which aims to change the way people view disability. They host the “Love Lounge” which offers advice and practical tips on sex and relationships. This can be done via video call, or alternatively you can submit a question to Lovelounge@enhancetheuk.org for written advice.

Website link: <https://enhancetheuk.org/about-the-love-lounge/#contact>

Macmillan "Cancer and Your Sex Life"

This booklet explores how cancer may physically, emotionally, and practically change your sex life. It covers how cancer and treatment can affect sexual drive and performance and what support or treatment can be pursued to manage this. The booklet is suitable for LGBT and cis-alternative identities such as trans, non-binary, and intersex.

Website link:

https://be.macmillan.org.uk/downloads/cancerinformation/livingwithandaftercancer/MAC17968_E01_Sex%20life_Low%20res%20PDF_20191101.PDF

Menopause Matters

A website which offers a paid subscription for a magazine centred around menopausal concerns and information. However, on their site you will also find several free online educational resources as well as a forum to access expert advice and emotional support from others in similar situations.

Website link: <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

Prostate Cancer UK – Prostate Cancer and Your Sex Life Booklet

A detailed booklet containing a variety of information regarding managing the impact of prostate cancer on sex lives. It includes information on possible physical problems, but also importantly on your thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Website link: [prostate-cancer-and-your-sex-life.pdf \(prostatecanceruk.org\)](#)

Sex and the Spine

Live online webinars/ workshops, one-to-one online consultations with experts, and a mixture of free and paid video resources on their website/ YouTube channel to help



individuals with spinal conditions recover sexual intimacy. Topics include erectile dysfunction, female sexual dysfunction, body confidence, sexual aids, pain rehabilitation, and sexual positions.

Website link: <https://nspine.teachable.com/>

Sexual Advice Association - Sexual Health Resources

An organisation which offers a large catalogue of free online resources (sexual health tests, factsheets, videos, books, etc.) and gender-specific advice with the aim of educating individuals and couples to support them through sexual difficulties.

Website link: <https://sexualadviceassociation.co.uk/>

Sex with Cancer

An online shop, an artwork and a public campaign exploring how people living with and beyond cancer can take agency over their own health and wellbeing.

Website link: <https://www.sexwithcancer.com/>

Trekstock "Sex and Cancer"

This information site discusses cancer-related sexual concerns and provides advice on how to maintain a normal, healthy sex life through and beyond treatment. There are links to several other information sites, videos and podcasts for a range of concerns including cervical screening information, how cancer affects sex drive, menopause and LGBT+ tailored articles.

Website link: [Sex and cancer](#)

The Vaginismus Network

A new website organised by a small team of individuals with vaginismus under the aim of raising awareness, sharing stories, and providing support to others living with the condition. This includes offering free online information, advice on getting a smear test or contacting a psychosexual therapist, and setting up support groups, meet-ups, workshops, and social events. There are also occasional talks delivered by medical and sexual health professionals.

Website link: <https://www.thevaginismusnetwork.com/>

Vanilla Blush Clothing

This company sells fashionable lingerie, underwear, swimwear, sportswear, and menswear to support individuals who have undergone major body disfigurement surgery (stoma/scars/hernias). Some items may be available as a free prescription under the NHS in certain cases.

Website link: <https://www.vblush.com/>



Other APSS Information and Resources

The Adult Psychological Support Service has a range of signposting information sheets on topics such as: coping at different stages of the cancer pathway, supporting your physical and emotional wellbeing, relationships, and information specific to certain types of cancer.

You can view the signposting information sheets on The Royal Marsden's [Patient Information Library](#) and the [Adult Psychological Support Service Website](#) (under 'Further information and resources'). You can also request a copy of these by emailing Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk or telephoning **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea) / **020 8661 3006** (Sutton).

Additional support services

Cancer Care Map

An online database of cancer support services. You can search by postcode or by particular themes e.g. cancer type.

Website link: <https://www.cancercaremap.org/>

Maggie's Cancer Centres

Cancer care centres with multiple locations, including The Royal Marsden Hospital, Sutton and Charing Cross Hospital, West London. Workshops, groups, information and one-to-one counselling available.

Website link: <https://www.maggies.org/>

Phone number: **0300 123 1801**

NHS Talking Therapies

NHS website to help you find your local psychological talking therapies service based on your GP address. Your local NHS talking therapies service can be helpful if you would like psychological support for cancer when you are no longer regularly coming in for appointments at The Royal Marsden, as well as for concerns unrelated to cancer or that predated your cancer and have become worse due to it.

Website link: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service/find-your-gp>

If you need any specialist and personalised advice about your cancer treatment, symptoms or side effects, please contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **020 8915 6899**.

The Royal Marsden's Adult Psychological Support Service offers short-term, cancer-specific psychological and psychiatric support. You can either self-refer or ask somebody in your Royal Marsden healthcare team to refer you. For more information, visit [Adult Psychological Support Service | The Royal Marsden](#). Alternatively, contact us directly on **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea), **020 8661 3006** (Sutton), or email Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk.



If you have ideas for other signposting or information sheets, or if you would like to be involved in working with APSS to improve the service we

offer, please scan the QR code to see more about our patient and public involvement, or email Psychological.SupportAdmin@rmh.nhs.uk or telephone **020 7808 2777** (Chelsea) / **020 8661 3006** (Sutton) with your ideas.

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