

Coping With the Loss of Fertility

Sometimes, cancer and its treatment can lead to a loss of the chance to have children. This loss of fertility can have a tremendous impact to happiness and your sense of self, whether you wanted to have children soon or perhaps someday. This fact sheet will cover:

- The impacts of a loss of fertility
- Emotional concerns about your loss
- How to speak with others and ask for help



What Does the Loss of Fertility Mean?

The loss of fertility can impact different parts of your life – from the way you feel about yourself to current and future relationships. Understanding your situation may help you cope. Uncertainty of the future can cause stress. While you may have lost the ability to have children of your own, there are options.

Speak with your health care team to understand your treatment and post-treatment care. They can connect you to fertility specialists who can answer questions regarding fertility options and alternatives such as adoption.



Help Yourself Emotionally

Let yourself feel. There are no right or wrong emotions to feel, only that you allow yourself to process them. Allow yourself time to grieve and feel sadness, anger, guilt or any other thing. Try to find new ways to express your feelings, from using a punching bag to keeping a journal for your hardest emotions.

Don't try to find reasons or blame. Just as with your cancer diagnosis, there is often no 'reason' why this has happened. Blame of any kind, especially self-blame, is not helpful. These misplaced feelings use energy that could be better used in activities of peace and relaxation – yoga, meditation, art or music.



Let Others Help

Communicate. The loss of fertility can take a toll on existing relationships. It is natural to decline invitations to certain events, such as baby showers, birthdays or family dinners. While your privacy is most important, consider informing those closest to you about the changes in your life. Doing so can help friends and family learn how to support you in difficult times.

Teamwork. If you are in a relationship, you and your partner can help support one another. The way you feel will change day to day. Just like your feelings will change, so will your partner's. What is most important is discussion and processing this together. Work as a team to find ways of staying connected – for example, go for a walk, hold hands, make and share a meal together.

Get support. The loss of fertility can be devastating. At times this sense of loss is not noticed by others, which only adds to the feelings of shame and isolation. As difficult as this is to remember, there are people out there who want to help. Whether through friends, family, professional counseling or support groups, there are ways to feel less alone and build hope for the future that lies ahead.

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include resource navigation, counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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