

**WORLD
CANCER
DAY 4 FEB**

I CAN



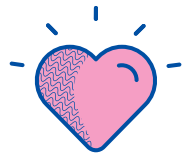
LOVE, AND BE LOVED

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I CAN LOVE, AND BE LOVED



Cancer affects everyone in a patient's life in different ways. Partners, families and friends can take steps to work together through the challenges of cancer and its treatment so that no one faces the disease alone.

There is no 'right way' for a cancer patient and their partner to cope with cancer, but there are actions that couples can take to support each other through this challenging time.¹ For example, keeping the lines of communication open and taking time to talk about feelings and difficult topics such as the fear of recurrence or financial concerns can be helpful in dealing with the emotional impact.²

For many, one of the longest lasting and most devastating consequences of a cancer diagnosis is the impact on sexual health and wellbeing.³ Both men and women can experience changes to sexual function and sexuality after cancer treatment.⁴

Changes may be associated with side effects of cancer treatment – sometimes these are short-term such as fatigue or pain, or for others there may be long-term effects, such as erectile dysfunction due to some treatments for prostate cancer. Seeking information and assistance from health professionals and cancer support services can help cancer patients to adjust to changes in sexual function and assist couples to renegotiate sex and intimacy.⁵

Friends and families can also play a major role in providing emotional, social and practical support. Spending time with a person, being willing to talk about their experiences and offering assistance, even with small tasks, can all be enormously helpful.⁶ For some people, support may be needed over many years after the initial diagnosis as they continue to live with the physical and emotional impact of cancer even when treatment is finished.

For a person living with cancer, strong emotional support and loving relationships with partners, friends and families can make a big difference in their life.

This factsheet is aimed at



Patients
& Carers

1. Macmillan Cancer Support. Relationships – You and your Partner. <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/relationships/you-and-your-partner>
2. Livestrong. Communicating with your partner. <http://www.livestrong.org/we-can-help/preparing-yourself/communicating-with-your-partner/>
3. Ussher JM, Perz J & Gilbert, E. (2012). Changes to sexual well-being and intimacy after breast cancer. *Cancer nursing*, 35, 456-65.
4. Girgis A, Lambert S, Johnson C, et al. (2013). Physical, Psychosocial, Relationship, and Economic Burden of Caring for People With Cancer: A Review. *J Oncol Practice*, 9, 197-202
5. Perz J, Ussher JM, Gilbert et al (2014). Feeling well and talking about sex. *BMC Cancer* 14:228.
6. American Cancer Society. How to be a friend to someone with cancer. <http://www.cancer.org/treatment/understandingyourdiagnosis/talkingaboutcancer/how-to-be-a-friend-to-someone-with-cancer>