

**A cancer diagnosis can often impact how you view dating and romantic relationships. Often, it can be difficult to adjust to the emotional and physical challenges that accompany a diagnosis. This fact sheet will cover:**

- The way you feel about yourself
- When and how to start dating again
- Discussing cancer with your partner
- Physical intimacy



## Your Comfort and Self-Esteem

**Be comfortable with yourself.** Cancer and its treatment can have a major impact on you mentally and physically. You may feel different since the last time you dated and nervous about meeting new people. Make sure you feel good about yourself and where you are first.

**Stay Positive.** Dating is not always easy, even before a cancer diagnosis. Rejection and not finding the right match can be common. Try not to raise your expectations too much and try to enjoy the experience of simply meeting people.

**Get support.** While friends and family can help, a support group can provide guidance, perspective and a unique judgment-free environment. CancerCare's licensed oncology social workers can help with your emotional well-being, free of charge. Call 800-813-HOPE (4673).



## A Return to Dating

**Decide when it's the right time for you.** Managing everything from doctor appointments or treatment side effects can be difficult and stressful. Don't push yourself into new relationships until you feel that you are ready.

**Start slow, start small.** It's normal to feel nervous or anxious about dating. Consider getting involved in group social events, taking a local class or joining a club. Starting small with these types of activities can help build confidence, self-esteem and social skills.

**Your health is a top priority.** Do not pressure yourself to do too much or be too active. If your mental state or physical comfort change, you should focus on getting better. Your health is most important.



## Talking About Your Diagnosis

**Plan when to talk about your cancer.** Before long, you may want to tell your partner about your cancer and treatment. Wait until you are ready. Consider preparing answers to questions they may have about side effects, the possibility of the cancer returning and more.

**Be honest.** Being clear about your feelings and about your cancer diagnosis can encourage the person you are dating to be honest about their feelings as well. Communication, honesty and trust will become increasingly significant as your relationship grows.



## Physical Intimacy

**Talking about intimacy or the physical closeness in a new relationship is important.** You may feel self-conscious about changes to your body due to cancer treatment. Talking about your feelings may help your relationship and improve emotional trust. These conversations can be difficult, so you may want to prepare. Decide what you want to say. You may want to write it down to help guide the conversation. Be open with your partner about your desires, needs and what you feel able to do.

### 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.cancercares.org](http://www.cancercares.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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