

**BEATING
CANCER
IS IN
OUR BLOOD.**

**SEXUALITY & YOUNG ADULT CANCER:
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**



LEUKEMIA &
LYMPHOMA
SOCIETY



SEXUALITY AND CANCER: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Anne Katz, PhD, RN, FAAN
*Sexuality Counselor/ Clinical Nurse
Specialist*
CancerCare Manitoba
Winnipeg, Canada

Dr. Katz has no disclosures.

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Objectives

- Situate young adult sexuality in the trajectory of normal developmental milestones
- Describe potential changes for young adult men and women after hematologic cancer
- Provide some guidance on how to address these issues



Developmental tasks of young adulthood

- Creating a sexual identity
- Establishing romantic and sexual relationships
- Exploring sexual preferences and practices

Morgan, Davies, Palmer & Plaster 2010



Identity formation

- Who am I?
- Who do I want to be?
- Who do I want to be with?
- How do I want others to see me?



Context of relationship development



Early young adulthood (15 – 19 years)

- Fluid relationships
- Sexual activity without commitment



Middle early adulthood (19 – 26 years)

- Relationships increase in duration
- Level of intimacy deepens



Older early adulthood (27 – 35 years)

- Committed relationships
- Sexuality and intimacy connected

Establishing romantic and sexual relationships

- Cultural and social norms
 - Flirting
 - Asking someone out on a date
 - Appearance
 - Fitting in with peers



Cancer = interruption

- Gap in socialization → missed opportunities
- Missed experiences and diminished maturation
- Missed sex education at school
- Over-protective parents → lack of distancing, independence and sexual identity

(Evan, Kaufman, Cook, & Zeltzer, 2006)

Disclosure

- When?
- How?
- Conditions?



So how do you tell?

- It all depends on what you are comfortable disclosing.
- A good place to start is to state simply: "I had cancer ___ months or years ago."
- Wait for a response. If they don't say anything immediately, don't try to fill the silence. (This is big stuff, and they may need to collect their thoughts for a few moments.)
- If they change the subject, it may mean that they aren't able to process this and you need to ask them at another time what they think or feel about your disclosure.
- If they ask you to tell them more about what happened, you can start simple and let their questions guide how much detail to give.

Altered body

- Scars
- Stretch marks
- Weight gain
- Weight loss



What can you do about this?

- Think about what you like about your body instead of what is changed or different.
- Remind yourself that others will like those parts of you too .
- Ask a close friend to look at and describe your scars and your body; someone else's view may be quite different from your own.
- Talk to others with cancer and ask how they cope.
- We all have things that we don't like about our bodies—potential partners do, too.

What else can you do?

- Accept that it can take a year or even more to get used to the new you.
- Try to wear your pre-cancer clothes; dressing the way you used to can help make you feel like you used to.
- Make up can help you feel better, but you have to take the effort to use it.
- Working out, or just getting some form of activity, can help you feel better about your body.
- If you just can't move on and accept your new self, think about getting support.
- A friend or family member may be able to provide you with the support you need. Or, you may need to see a professional who can help.
- Ask your nurse or doctor to refer you to a social worker or a sexuality counselor or therapist.

How do I ask for help about sex?

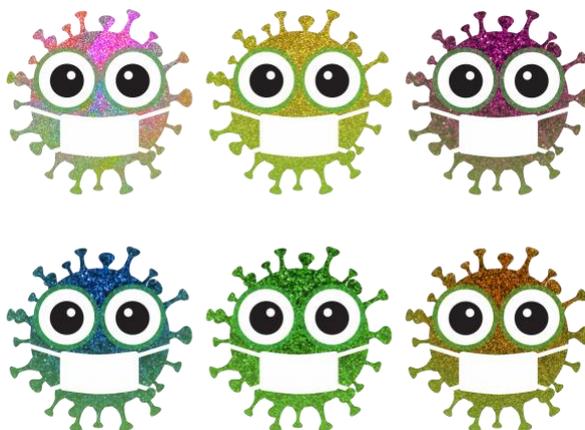
- Say what you mean. No beating about the bush!
- “When my partner touches my _____, it feels numb. Why is that?”
- “The last time I masturbated I noticed that _____. What can be done about this”
- “How will I know when it's OK to have oral sex/go down on someone?”
- “What precautions does my partner need to know about if we want to _____?”

And don't worry if you blush; it can't be controlled. And if your oncology care provider blushes, the same applies.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning YAs



Dating and sex in the time of COVID



HOW TO DATE DURING A PANDEMIC

- IF YOU CAN, START OUT WITH A VIRTUAL DATE



I really want to see you...

Me too.



- ASK YOUR PARTNER ABOUT THEIR PANDEMIC PRECAUTIONS



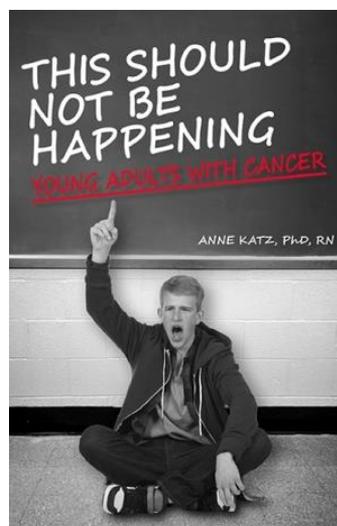
- CHECK LOCAL TRANSMISSION RATES IF YOU PLAN ON MEETING UP IN PERSON



- IF YOU PLAN ON GETTING INTIMATE, GET TESTED TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19



Thank you!



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

With Dr. Katz

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LLS EDUCATION & SUPPORT RESOURCES

HOW TO CONTACT US:

To contact an **Information Specialist** about disease, treatment and support information, resources and clinical trials:

-  **Call: (800) 955-4572**
Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET
-  **Chat live online: www.LLS.org/InformationSpecialists**
Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET
-  **Email: infocenter@LLS.org**
All email messages are answered within one business day.

CLINICAL TRIAL SUPPORT CENTER
Work one-on-one with an LLS Clinical Trial Nurse Navigator who will help you find clinical trials and personally assist you throughout the entire clinical-trial process.
www.LLS.org/Navigation



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BOOKLETS
Find Fact Sheets on Sexuality, along with other important subjects for Patients and Caregivers.
www.LLS.org/Booklets.





THANK YOU

Please fill out Program Evaluation at
www.LLS.org/SexualityEval



We have one goal: A world without blood cancers

