

YOUR SEX LIFE WHEN YOU HAVE LYMPHOEDEMA

Your sex life and lymphoedema

Lymphoedema can affect your sex life and change the way you see, and feel about, your body. You may worry that your partner no longer finds you attractive. If you don't have a partner, you may worry about a physical relationship in the future. Coping with lymphoedema may make you feel too tired to have sex, and in some situations, may make it physically difficult to have sex.

Don't think that sex is never going to be important in your life again. It may involve a period of adjustment for you and your partner. As the lymphoedema improves and you get used to managing it, you'll probably find that your sex drive improves as well.

To make sex more comfortable and enjoyable, you may want to:

- find sexual positions that don't put weight on the area affected by lymphoedema
- have sex when you feel your swelling is less, for example many people find that their swelling is less in the morning or after wearing a compression garment for a few hours
- use extra lubricant if you have genital lymphoedema to reduce friction to the skin
- have sex while partly dressed or in dimmed light if you feel very self-conscious.

It may help to talk to your partner about your concerns if you feel very self-conscious. Sharing your feelings can help you regain some confidence. Partners are often concerned about how to express their love physically and emotionally after treatment. Cuddles, kisses and massages are affectionate and sensual ways of showing how much you care for someone, even if you don't feel like having sex. Talking can also reassure you that your feelings for each other haven't changed.

Many people feel embarrassed or self-conscious when talking about sex. It's important to remember that your lymphoedema specialist or doctor will be used to talking about these issues and can advise you where to go for help and support. If you need more expert help, they can refer you to a psychologist, counsellor or sexual therapist.

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