

## Managing Symptoms after Prostate Cancer

# Feeling Like a Man

### *after Prostate Cancer Treatment*

#### ***Prostate cancer treatments often cause men to feel less like men.***

Urine leaks, a penis that won't get hard, or body changes like hot flashes, body hair loss, and weight gain can cause a crisis in how a man feels about himself. And, these may occur with prostate cancer treatment. Some men say they feel less manly and or less independent. Some say they don't even want to talk with women because they don't feel like "whole" men. They feel different.

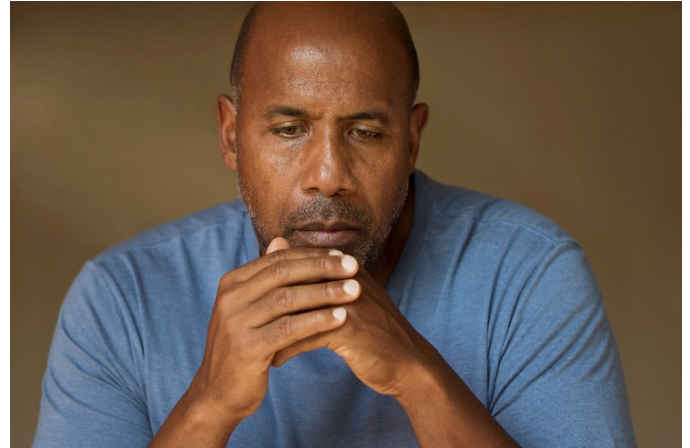
#### **The silence.**

You might not hear much about this because men also think they shouldn't complain, show weakness, or get upset. Some men feel embarrassed, not like themselves. Men don't realize that it's normal to feel sad, angry, anxious, hopeless, and even grief-stricken at times. Prostate cancer treatments can be hard on a man's body and his mind.

#### **You don't have to suffer in silence.**

It helps if you can share your feelings with others close to you. You might do this by:

- Talking with your partner, a close friend, or someone who has had prostate cancer
- Writing in a journal every day
- Joining a support group either in person or online
- Finding a counselor you are comfortable with



#### **Over time, you will gain a better sense of control and peace of mind.**

The results and challenges of prostate cancer treatment vary from man to man. Some men come to terms with changes fairly quickly. Others take much longer. Try the following tips and find out ways to manage your changes and challenges.

#### **What can I do to help myself feel better?**

Don't hide your feelings from yourself.

Don't pretend.

- Strong feelings are easier to manage when you admit to them. Being human, even being a male human, means having feelings. Learn to accept them, even the ones you don't "like."
- Keep in mind that feelings come and go. Even very powerful feelings lessen over time. Be patient with yourself.
- Find a way to share your feelings. You can use one of the ways listed above or other ways you have found helpful in the past.

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Sharing feelings of sadness, anger, and stress decreases their power and may give you a better sense of control.

Find other men who have been through prostate cancer treatment.

- Look for a support group or for men you know who have had prostate cancer. Ask them how they coped with strong feelings, especially of not feeling like a “whole” man.
- Visit [CancerCare®](#) or [Malecare](#) websites to learn more about online groups and chatrooms to talk to other men recovering from cancer treatment.

**Keep in mind the things that make you feel like a man and continue to do them.**

- Ask yourself, “In what ways am I the same man as before the cancer?”
- Think about what you can still do that makes you feel like a man.
  - Help others
  - Stay active and fit
  - Care for your home
  - Be involved in work or a community group



**If you have a partner, put effort into staying close and sexually active.**

- Imagine sex as a new adventure.
- Think of erection aids as sex toys and try to be playful.
- Be creative and experiment with new approaches. A sense of humor helps!
- Remember that your partner is learning too. Sharing feelings will help you and your partner feel closer. When you talk about your feelings, you will be more likely to work together to make sex good again. It will take time to find new ways to pleasure one another. You might try planning sexy dates.

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## ***When should I call or ask my doctor or nurse for help?***

Ask your doctor or nurse for a referral to a counselor when you:

- Feel depressed or anxious for more than 2 weeks
- Feel that you can't get back your self-confidence as a man
- Want a referral to a counselor who specializes in sexual problems

Remember, asking for help doesn't mean you're weak. It means you're strong enough to admit that you can't do everything alone.



This information was developed under guidance of the Michigan Cancer Consortium Prostate Cancer Action Committee. Their efforts were supported in part by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Cooperative Agreement 5NU58DP003921. The contents of the publication do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

This guide contains general information and is not meant to replace consultation with your doctor or nurse.

**Revised September 2016**

