

Planning for life after cancer can be an important part of healing. Some types of cancer and cancer treatments can change your ability to have children. The ability to get or make someone pregnant is called fertility.

Before cancer treatment begins, talk to your health care team about ways to protect your fertility. Knowing what to expect can help you prepare for and manage many issues.

It is very important to talk with your doctor about fertility BEFORE you start treatment or have surgery for your cancer.

Will cancer affect my ability to have children?

It depends on your age and details of your treatment:

- The type and amount of cancer medicines you take
- Radiation to the pelvis or certain areas of the brain
- Surgery that removes all or part of the organs involved in having children (such as the uterus, ovaries, or testicles)

Will my treatments make me unable to have sex?

Cancer and its treatments sometimes cause side effects that make it hard to have sex.

Men: You may have trouble getting or keeping an erection. Having sex could become painful.

Women: You may have discomfort from being too dry. Radiation can cause scars that make having sex painful. You may bleed during or after sex. You may have an abnormal flow of fluids from the vagina.

Talk to your health care team if any of these things happen. Your team can find ways to help.

What questions should I ask my care team?

Here are some helpful questions to ask about fertility:

- What are my options?
- How much time do I have before I start treatment?
- How will I know if I am fertile after my cancer treatment?

- How do I know when it is safe to try having a baby?
- Will there be any health risks to me or my future children?
- What can be done to help protect my fertility?

Huntsman Cancer Institute works with the Utah Center for Reproductive Medicine (UCRM) at the University of Utah to help people with cancer who want to have children after treatment. Here is how the process works.

Men: The UCRM collects your semen and freezes it before cancer treatment begins. They can store semen for many years. They use it later to make your partner pregnant.

Women: The UCRM collects some of your eggs before cancer treatment begins. The eggs may be frozen right away or first fertilized and then frozen. Fertilized eggs are called embryos. Frozen eggs or embryos can be stored for years. You can use them when you are ready for pregnancy.

For some women, doctors can give medicines that may protect fertility during cancer treatment.

Experts at the UCRM will work with you and your health care team to find the best fertility plan for you.

For more information

Utah Center for Reproductive Medicine at the University of Utah

- Call 801-581-3834
- Visit healthcare.utah.edu/ucrm

G. Mitchell Morris Cancer Learning Center

- Call 1-888-424-2100
- Email cancerinfo@hci.utah.edu
- Drop by the 6th floor of Huntsman Cancer Institute Hospital