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# Living with Cervical Cancer - A Quick Guide

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This is a brief summary of the information on 'Living with cervical cancer' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Coping with cervical cancer
- Fertility and cervical cancer
- Your sex life and cervical cancer
- Questions for your doctor
- Cervical cancer organisations

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## Coping with cervical cancer

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of cancer, both practically and emotionally. You are likely to be feeling very upset and confused at first.

You may also have to come to terms with losing your fertility. Having your womb removed (hysterectomy) can be very upsetting, even to women who are past their menopause and would not be having any more pregnancies anyway.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you have to work out how to manage practically. There may be money matters to sort out. Who do you tell that you have cancer?

And how do you find the words? There may be children to consider.

The 'coping with cancer' section of CancerHelp UK contains lots of information on practical and emotional issues that you may find helpful. If you would like more information about anything to do with coping with cervical cancer, contact one of the cervical cancer organisations.

## Fertility and cervical cancer

### Losing your fertility

Your treatment will mean that you can no longer have children (unless you had very early cervical cancer). Even if you were not planning to have any (or any more) children, this can be quite a shock. You will experience all the feelings that come with a natural change of life, but on top of coping with a diagnosis of cancer. Many women feel very upset if they have to have a hysterectomy. This can be true even if you have had your menopause. It may take some time to get over these feelings. There is support available if you need it.

### Pre cancer treatment and pregnancy

Unless you have a hysterectomy, treatment for pre-cancerous changes will not affect



your ability to become pregnant. For most women, treatment will not cause problems during future pregnancies. But with cone biopsy and LLETZ, there can be a small increase in risk of giving birth early, or having a low birth weight baby. This may seem worrying, but bear in mind that the risks are small. Laser ablation is not linked to any pregnancy risks.

### Finding support

It may help you to share your feelings with other women who have been through similar experiences. You may be able to do this through your local cancer support group. You could talk to your GP, nurse or consultant about finding some counselling. And there are details of how to find sources of emotional support and counselling in the 'coping with cancer' section of CancerHelp UK.

### Your sex life and cervical cancer

#### Early menopause

You may find that your treatment brings on an early menopause. The symptoms are no different to those of a natural menopause, but they can be more intense if it comes on suddenly. If you want to, there is no reason why you shouldn't take HRT if your treatment causes an early menopause.

#### Other effects of radiotherapy

Radiotherapy for cervical cancer can cause a number of side effects. These are fibrosis and narrowing of the vagina, vaginal dryness, pain when having sex, and delicate skin inside the vagina. There is more information about these side effects and how to cope with them in the 'sex and cancer for women' section of CancerHelp UK.

### Common fears about sex and cancer

You may feel nervous about having sex after you have been diagnosed with cervical cancer, or have had treatment. If you want to, you can resume your normal sex life within a few weeks of finishing radiotherapy or having surgery. It is perfectly safe once your body has healed. Your partner cannot catch cancer from you.

If you are still worried, anxious or depressed, you are not likely to feel like having sex. Talk things over with your partner. Together you should be able to work out what is best for you both.

### Questions for your doctor about living with cervical cancer

- Where can I get help dealing with my feelings?
- Do I have to pay for counselling?
- When can I go back to work?
- Can I take up my usual sports, hobbies and activities again?
- When can I start having sex again?
- What help can I get in managing permanent treatment side effects?
- Is there anyone I can talk to about the effect of treatment on my sex life?
- Can my partner come too?
- What practical help is available?
- Can I get help with money?
- Can anyone help me with claiming benefits?

### Cervical Cancer Organisations

Cancer Research UK  
 Main website: [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)  
 Patient information website:  
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>



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Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808  
800 40 40

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust  
Phone: 020 7936 7498  
Website: [www.jotrust.co.uk](http://www.jotrust.co.uk)  
Email: [info@jotrust.co.uk](mailto:info@jotrust.co.uk)

Gynae C  
Phone: 01793 491 116  
Email: [info@gynaec.co.uk](mailto:info@gynaec.co.uk)  
Website: [www.gynaec.co.uk/](http://www.gynaec.co.uk/)

## More information

For more information about cervical cancer, visit our website  
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for cancer trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on  
**0808 800 4040** 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

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Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in January 2011. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2011. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).