

Colorectal Nursing Department

# Sexuality and your feelings after surgery

Information for patients



It is perfectly normal to have worries after major surgery and/or a serious diagnosis. You will need time to recover from the treatment or surgery, so physically you may not be able to relax and enjoy an intimate relationship for a period of time. This will vary according to the length of your illness, the extent of the surgery you may have had, and your general state of health before or after any operation.

Reduced libido (sex drive) can lead to anxiety for both you and your partner, so it is vital that you talk to each other. This can help you to understand how you are both feeling, allowing you to reassure each other.

A lot of support can be gained from your loved ones, but any relationship problems or bottled up feelings can be also made worse at this difficult time. It is better not to let matters drift by or build up. By talking through your problems you can hopefully stop them from getting too big. You may well find that your partner is worried about a lot of the same issues as you are.

You may wish to talk to someone outside of your relationship. For this to be as helpful as possible you will need to feel comfortable talking through the details of your problems. Common areas of concern are practical issues such as sexual positions, vaginal dryness, impotence and loss of libido.

If you don't have a partner at present, the organisations and support groups listed may still be able to help you to deal with problems, such as a new relationship or partner; living with your own altered body image; and living with yourself.

We have gathered a list of organisations which offer impartial and confidential advice, but please also speak to your stoma nurse, GP or any member of staff who you feel you can talk to about personal matters.

## **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BAC)**

As well as training information, BAC provides free local lists of counsellors.

Tel: **01455 883 300**

Website: **[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)**

List of counsellors: **<http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/>**

Email: **[bacp@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk)**

## **College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists (COSRT)**

Provides information on therapist listings, as well as training courses on sexual, marital and relationship therapy.

Tel: **0208 543 2707**

Website: **<http://cosrt.org.uk/>**

Email: **[info@cosrt.org.uk](mailto:info@cosrt.org.uk)**

## **Carers UK**

Advice and factsheets for carers of older or disabled people. Local offices and support groups are available.

Tel: **0808 808 7777**

Website: **[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)**

## **Citizens Advice Bureaux**

Provides free, impartial, confidential advice and help to anybody on any subject. For your local bureau check your telephone directory or visit:

Website: **[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/)**

Tel: **03444 111 444** (for residents of England)

## **Colostomy Association**

Provides help, support and information to anyone who has had, or is facing, a colostomy operation. Free information leaflets available.

Tel: **0118 939 1537**

Helpline: **0800 328 4257**

Website: **[www.colostomyassociation.org.uk](http://www.colostomyassociation.org.uk)**

Email: **[cass@colostomyassociation.org.uk](mailto:cass@colostomyassociation.org.uk)**

## **Family Planning Association**

The leading voluntary organisation, combining sexual health and family planning. Their aim is to promote sexual health and family planning by means of information, research, education and publicity.

Website: **[www.fpa.org.uk/](http://www.fpa.org.uk/)**

## **Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group**

Mutual support group which aims to help anyone who has had, or is about to have, colon removal, to return to a fully active and normal life as soon as possible.

Tel: **0800 018 4724** or **0208 9334 4043**

Website: **[www.iasupport.org/](http://www.iasupport.org/)**

Email: **[info@iasupport.org](mailto:info@iasupport.org)**

## **NHS Choices**

Information about erectile dysfunction.

Website: **[www.nhs.uk/conditions/Erectile-dysfunction/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Erectile-dysfunction/Pages/Introduction.aspx)**

## **Switchboard – the LGBT+ helpline**

24 hour helpline for lesbians and gay men, bisexual, transgender and other-identifying people, their families and friends, giving advice, information and referrals.

Tel: **0300 330 0630**

Website: **<https://switchboard.lgbt/>**

Email: **[chris@switchboard.lgbt](mailto:chris@switchboard.lgbt)**

## **Macmillan Cancer Support**

Tel: **0808 808 00 00**

Website: **[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)**

## **Marie Stopes UK**

Leading independent provider of sexual and reproductive health services in the UK, including counselling.

Website: **[www.mariestopes.org.uk/women/counselling](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk/women/counselling)**

Advice and help from specialised counsellors on sexual and relationship problems. Therapy takes the form of discussion; it may involve psychotherapy and advice may be given about specific exercises or techniques.

## **National Care Association**

Advice for carers of older, disabled or seriously ill people.

Tel: **01634 716 615**

Website: **[www.nationalcareassociation.org.uk](http://www.nationalcareassociation.org.uk)**

Email: **[info@nationalcareassociation.org.uk](mailto:info@nationalcareassociation.org.uk)**

## **Relate**

Offers counselling and psychosexual therapy to people wanting help with adult couple relationships.

Tel: **0300 100 1234**

Website: **[www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)**

## **The Tavistock Centre for couple relationships**

Relationship counselling and couple psychotherapy.

Tel: **0207 380 1960**

Website: **[www.tccr.ac.uk](http://www.tccr.ac.uk)**

## How to contact us

If you have any questions about your diet or concerns about what to eat, please contact the Advanced Nurse Practitioner or Specialist Nurse Practitioner.

Tel: **01865 221 839** or **01865 235 367**  
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: **[colorectal.nursing@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:colorectal.nursing@ouh.nhs.uk)**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **[PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk)**

Author: Stoma ANP/SNP for OUH  
March 2016  
Review: March 2019  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Oxford OX3 9DU  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)

