

# Preventing Pregnancy during Cancer Treatment

## What you need to know



## Why you should NOT get pregnant during cancer treatment

**When having cancer treatment, it is important that you or your partner do not get pregnant.**

Cancer treatments, like radiation and systemic therapy (chemotherapy, immunotherapy, hormone or targeted therapy) may damage eggs, an embryo (very early part of pregnancy), a fetus (unborn baby), or sperm.

If you can get pregnant, your healthcare team will offer to do a pregnancy test before treatment starts. This test is done with your agreement.

## What could happen if you get pregnant during treatment?

- You may have to consider stopping treatment
- You may not be able to have certain treatments or tests
- Some cancer treatments may damage the egg, sperm, or embryo (especially during the first 3 months). The health of the person having the child may also be affected
- You may have a miscarriage (fetus or embryo dies) or the baby may have damage (the baby's brain or body may be affected)

## How do you prevent pregnancy?

It is important to prevent pregnancy while you are getting cancer treatment and often for some time after treatment. Talk to your healthcare team about when it's safe to get pregnant after treatment.

If you or your partner can become pregnant, it is important to use effective birth control when having vaginal sex.

**Some hormonal birth control (such as the birth control pill, patch or injection) may not work during cancer treatment.**

Your healthcare team can talk with you about what types of birth control are safe to use during your treatment. They can also talk about any concerns you have about preventing pregnancy before, during and after your cancer treatment.

## Sex and cancer treatment

Systemic therapy treatments may be in your body fluids. If your partner comes in contact with your bodily fluids containing treatment drugs during sex, they may harm your partner or fetus.

**We recommend using barrier devices** (condoms, dental dams) throughout your treatment during oral, vaginal or anal sex. You should use these devices for at least 48 hours after your last treatment. This will prevent your partner from being exposed to any medication that may be in your body fluids.

## For more information

**On preventing pregnancy & effective birth control/contraception:**

[www.sexandu.ca/contraception/non-hormonal-contraception/](http://www.sexandu.ca/contraception/non-hormonal-contraception/)

[https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health\\_Information/Health\\_Topics/Documents/Preventing\\_Pregnancy\\_During\\_Cancer\\_Treatment.pdf](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Preventing_Pregnancy_During_Cancer_Treatment.pdf)

**On cancer sexual health and fertility:**

[www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/managing-symptoms-side-effects/sexual-health](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/managing-symptoms-side-effects/sexual-health)

[bccancer.libguides.com/pathfinder-sexuality](http://bccancer.libguides.com/pathfinder-sexuality)

## Notes:

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**If you think you could be pregnant, please tell your healthcare team right away!**