

Fertility

Some cancer treatments can affect your ability to get pregnant or make someone pregnant (your fertility). The effect on your fertility may be temporary, but some treatments cause long-term or permanent damage.

Your cancer doctor will explain the possible risks to your fertility. You may also be referred to a fertility clinic for advice. It may be possible to reduce the effects of treatment on your fertility. Or you may have a treatment that is less likely to affect it.

If treatment might make you infertile, your cancer doctor should talk to you about possible ways to preserve your fertility. It may be possible to store:

- sperm or testicular tissue
- eggs, embryos or ovarian tissue.

People have different reactions to finding out they are at risk of infertility. You may find it hard to cope. You may accept it quickly and feel that dealing with the cancer is more important. Or you may feel the impact months or years later. Talking to a partner, family member or friend may help. If you prefer to talk to a counsellor, your GP or cancer doctor can arrange this. Many hospitals have specialist nurses who can offer support. Fertility clinics also have a counsellor you can talk to.

You may decide not to have children. This can be a clear choice that you are happy with. But sometimes it is more complicated. You may feel the choice has been taken away from you because of cancer. You may find this very upsetting. It may help to talk to someone about this. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Everyone is different.

Things to consider

- If possible, talk to your cancer doctor or specialist nurse about fertility before you start cancer treatment.
- It can be difficult to predict if your fertility will be affected by treatment. It is important to use contraception to prevent a pregnancy during cancer treatment and for a time afterwards. This is because some treatments can affect a developing baby.
- After cancer treatment, fertility tests can help measure how close you are to the menopause or if you are producing healthy sperm. They do not always clearly show whether you can have children. The tests may help you decide what to do next.
- If your fertility does recover, it is difficult to predict when this will be. It could happen without you being aware of it. If you do not want to start a pregnancy, you should keep using contraception. You should continue using contraception unless the infertility is permanent.
- If cancer treatment has damaged your fertility, you may decide to have fertility treatment. A doctor at the fertility clinic will talk to you about your fertility and treatments that may help.
- The NHS may pay for a certain number of fertility treatments. There are rules about funding fertility treatment on the NHS. The rules and funding are different across the UK.
- If treatment has made you infertile, you could consider using donated eggs, sperm or embryos to help you have children. This can be a hard decision. You and a partner may want to discuss it with a counsellor.
- If you are unable to have fertility treatment, or choose not to, you could consider adoption, fostering or surrogacy. There are organisations that can give information and support with each of these options.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Infertility Counselling Association • Fertility Network UK • Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.bica.net • www.fertilitynetworkuk.org Tel 0142 473 2361 • www.hfea.gov.uk Tel 0207 291 8200

Further information

macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/fertility-in-men
macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/fertility-in-women

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- **Cancer treatment and fertility – information for men**
- **Cancer treatment and fertility – information for women**

More information and support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit macmillan.org.uk

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these, visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.

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