

## Between the Sheets...

October 2018

This column will provide the platform for experts in the field to help men and women by providing answers to questions about sexual health and intimacy challenges that can result from prostate cancer treatment.

This column was compiled with the help of Dr. Jeffrey Albaugh, Director of Sexual Health at NorthShore University HealthSystem and at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, IL. Dr. Albaugh is a funded researcher, a board certified advanced practice urology clinical nurse specialist, and a board certified sexuality counselor. In addition to his many publications in peer reviewed journals and chapters in books on sexual dysfunction, Dr. Albaugh published *Reclaiming Sex and Intimacy After Prostate Cancer Treatment*. He has been quoted in media and publications as an expert in the treatment of sexual dysfunction, and is a member of the Us TOO Board of Directors.

### QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:

*After my nerve-sparing prostate surgery this past year, I seem to get more partial spontaneous erections in the morning. However, I'm not able to achieve an erection from stimulation by my partner. I'm very frustrated. Why is this happening?*

### RESPONSE FROM DR. JEFFREY ALBAUGH:

*Thank you for your great question. First, it is always good to have any erection response (spontaneous or with stimulation). In the early stages after prostate removal, you are looking for any signs of response from your penis with filling, thickening, heaviness, stretching or expanding. These are partial responses, even in the absence of any hardness. The nerves for erections must be dissected (pulled free) from the prostate during prostate removal. Even though they were spared, they were never meant to be touched or manipulated in any way. The nerves are traumatized and inflamed. They do not function properly because of this trauma and nerves can take a long time to recover. It can take an average of two years (and may continue to recover for up to five years) for nerve recovery. Erection recovery could happen quicker. Everyone is different in terms of erectile function recovery and not everyone will recover their function, unfortunately. Most men notice a slow, steady progression towards more fullness/thickness/filling in the penis, moving towards hardness over that two-year period. What you are experiencing is not unusual and it is a good sign of erectile recovery.*

*Many factors come into play when you are trying to have sex with your partner. You may be anxious or worried about erections or pleasing your partner. This anxiety causes a physical response from your body with increased adrenaline and this will often lead to losing your erection. When you are having sex, it is most helpful to stay focused and mindful so you and your partner can enjoy feeling connected and have pleasure (it is supposed to be fun). You and your partner don't need a hard penis to reach orgasm as men and women both can orgasm/climax without intercourse through oral stimulation, manual stimulation, rubbing genitals, and/or vibration on the genitals. It can be very helpful to talk with your partner about your fears and concerns about sex. Reaffirm that you want to please your partner and work together towards the goals of connectedness, pleasure and orgasms regardless of erections.*

*It is important to keep working with your healthcare team to regain sexual function through penile rehabilitation (promoting blood flow to the penis through regular stimulation and the use of various erectile dysfunction treatments such as pills, a vacuum device or penile injections, if needed). You can learn more about erections after prostate cancer treatment and penile rehabilitation at the upcoming Chicago Prostate Cancer Pathways for Patients and Caregivers event and webcast with live online audio and video on November 3, where I will be giving a presentation on the subject. To register, contact Terri Likowski at 877-978-7866 or [terril@ustoo.org](mailto:terril@ustoo.org). You can access the new edition of my book or download a free copy of my original book at [www.drjeffalbaugh.com](http://www.drjeffalbaugh.com).*

Do you have a question about sexual health or intimacy? If so, we invite you to send it to Us TOO. We'll select questions to feature in future *Between the Sheets* columns.

Please email your question to: [ustooBTS@ustoo.org](mailto:ustooBTS@ustoo.org)

### Or mail your letter to:

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Between the Sheets  
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Pssst!  
Check out our new  
feature on sex and intimacy,  
*Between the Sheets*...



## Let Us Help You Plan Your Path Through Every Step of Your Journey...

*Prostate Cancer Pathways for Patients and Caregivers* is a new educational event and webcast series from Us TOO International. The Englewood, NJ, *Pathways* event is the second of three regional events planned for 2018.

Each *Pathways* event provides valuable content including:

- An educational overview of prostate health and prostate cancer awareness
- Presentations with relevant content for newly diagnosed, recurring, and advanced patients
- Content to help Us TOO support group leaders maximize their impact on the local prostate cancer community

 **The Chicago Event will Feature a Special Presentation on Intimacy After Prostate Cancer Treatment**

### Presenters for the Chicago Event:

- Dr. Jeffrey Albaugh, Board Certified Advanced Practice Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Board Certified Sexuality Counselor, Director of Sexual Health at NorthShore University HealthSystem and at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, and member of the Us TOO Board of Directors.
- Others to be announced.

*All sessions will be webcast live and videotaped.*

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# Us TOO Presents: Prostate Cancer Pathways for Patients & Caregivers

*Free Educational Event  
and Webcast Series*

## Saturday, November 3 Chicago, IL

Location TBD  
10:00 am - 3:30 pm

**Schedule to be Announced**

Attend in person or watch the online webcast with live video and audio from the event. To register, contact Terri at 877-978-7866 or [terril@ustoo.org](mailto:terril@ustoo.org).

Please note that on-site space is limited. We will attempt to accommodate those registering in person on the day of the event, but we cannot guarantee a seat or a free lunch.



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