QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:
After my surgery, I was surprised to find that I had an orgasm even though I did not have any erection at all. Is there any problem with having an orgasm without an erection?

RESPONSE FROM DR. JEFFREY ALBAUGH:
Although it may seem strange because you have always had an erection along with orgasm, most men will experience the orgasm/climax sensation even in the complete absence of an erection after sufficient sexual stimulation. After radical prostatectomy, you will no longer ejaculate fluid because the ejaculate came from the prostate and seminal vesicles which have been removed. Different peripheral (local) nerves control the orgasm sensation as opposed to the nerves for erections. The nerves for climax sit further away from the prostate and are less impacted by the surgery since they are not typically directly manipulated during the prostate removal.

It may take some time for healing after surgery to fully experience the orgasm/climax sensation. One study of men with bilateral nerve sparing showed improvement up to 48 months post op, with the best improving mean outcomes orgasm sensation at 24-48 months (Salonia, A. et al., 2010). In a study of 408 men who had robotic bilateral nerve sparing radical prostatectomy, 90.7% were able to achieve orgasm compared to 82.1% of men who had unilateral nerve sparing and 60.8% of men who had non-nerve sparing surgery (Tewari, A., et al., 2011). Sensation was reported better by men 60 years old or younger than by older men. In my experience with men and our unpublished research of men followed for 2 years after nerve sparing radical prostatectomy, almost all men can experience the orgasm sensation. The majority of our men either describe it as different/diminished or similar to the pre-surgical orgasm/climax sensation. A small percentage of men have a more intense climax after prostatectomy. There is no problem with having an orgasm with no erection or a partial erection. It is difficult to not compare it to your memory of pre-surgery orgasm intensity, but to fully enjoy the sexual experience and orgasm you need to be fully present (and not comparing in your mind).

As you continue to recover after radical prostatectomy, you may find it helpful to be completely open and present during your sexual experiences to enjoy each sensation and pleasurable feeling. Anxiety can impact your erections and your ability to climax, so try and keep your mind directed to sex and pleasure. Being completely present experiencing every nuance of the sexual encounter may help you enjoy sex more fully.


You can access the new edition of my book or download a free copy of my original book at www.drijeffalbaugh.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@usto.org
Or mail your letter to:
Us TOO International
Between the Sheets
2720 S. River Road, Suite 112
Des Plaines, IL 0018
As the year comes to a close, please consider making a donation to help Us TOO International provide educational resources, support services and personal connections within the prostate cancer community through our:

- Network of more than 200 support groups across the country and abroad
- Inspire online prostate cancer communities (UsTOO.inspire.com)
- Toll-free Us TOO Prostate Cancer HelpLine (1-800-808-7866); including connecting callers with similar survivors for peer-to-peer conversations and support
- Monthly Hot SHEET newsletter and monthly News You Can Use updates and articles
- Support group meetings/services and telephone support groups including A Forum for Her
- New website content on sexual health and intimacy, erectile dysfunction, and urinary incontinence
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... all provided at no charge.

Your gift and the work we do together matters now more than ever. There are nearly 3 million men in the U.S. living with a prostate cancer diagnosis. That number is estimated to climb to 4 million by 2024 as men in the baby boomer generation age. Every one of those men and his loved ones will need access to education and support to make informed decisions on the best approach to minimize the impact of the disease and maximize the quality of life.

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