QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:
Ever since my surgery (open radical prostatectomy) my orgasms are pretty non-existent. Seems they’re not really worth all the bother of taking the pills to get an erection in the first place. Hope that works and, if it does, get the ‘deed done’ and then pretty much nothing in terms of feeling. Why is this happening and why didn’t someone tell me that would happen?

RESPONSE FROM DR. ANNE KATZ:
I’m going to answer the last question first, although it may be rhetorical. I don’t know why you were not told that this could happen as it is known that, after surgery, the QUALITY of orgasms may change. For some men, they are more intense to the point of pain. For others, they remain pretty much the same as before surgery. And for some men like you, unfortunately the SENSATION of orgasm is much decreased. You seem to be in the latter group and I hear your frustration. Many men in the first group (painful orgasm) may actively avoid orgasm because it hurts so much.

It is not really clear what the cause of this is. The pelvic floor muscles seem to be the ‘culprits’ in that much of the sensation of orgasm comes from contraction of these muscles. If you have a ‘loose’ pelvic floor, the sensation of orgasm may be muted to the point of non-existence. If your pelvic floor muscles are tight (this can happen from overdoing the pelvic floor muscle exercises recommended to prevent incontinence), orgasms may be painful. In my experience, men who are overweight or obese, especially in the mid-section tend to experience loss of sensation with orgasm due to the excess pressure of their belly on the pelvic floor muscles. Internal scar tissue after radical prostatectomy may play a role in this and internal nerve damage likely has a role too.

A visit to a knowledgeable pelvic floor physiotherapist can be very helpful. The American Physical Therapy Association is the official organization for physiotherapists in the U.S. and members of the public can search for a member through their website (http://aptapps.apta.org/findapt). However, it is important to ask if the physiotherapist you are considering visiting has expertise in pelvic floor physiotherapy, as this is not included in basic training programs. The physiotherapist will assess the tone of the pelvic floor muscles and suggest exercises and/or internal massage of the muscles to help correct the tone. Most people, including health care providers, don’t understand the importance of the pelvic floor muscles, but they hold the key to much of our daily functioning including posture, core stability, urination, defecation and yes, sexual pleasure too!

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

Or mail your letter to:
Us TOO International
Between the Sheets
2720 S. River Road, Suite 112
Des Plaines, IL 0018
2018 and the Us TOO Holiday Hope Campaign are coming to a close. But there is still time to help us give hope in the new year!

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
- Clinical Trials Finder website portal
- Educational videos and printed/digital materials
- Events, physician presentations and webcasts

... 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.

Please join us in giving the gift of Hope with a generous donation today.

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at www.ustoo.org/donatehope

Thank you and best wishes in 2019!