

Changes in sexuality are common after brain injury. It is normal to have questions and/or concerns about sex and intimacy for yourself or for your loved one. It can be hard to talk about, but it could be beneficial to talk with your health team. **They are here to help!**

Sexual changes can be caused by:

- The brain injury
- Medication side effects
- Hormonal changes
- Emotional and social factors
- Fatigue

Sensory changes:

- Sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste can all be affected.
- Sex might feel different than before your injury.
 - It could be helpful to explore new tools, lubrication, or new ways of finding pleasure.
- You may need to be aware of areas with decreased sensation.
 - It is important to protect your skin.

Physical changes:

- Changes in movement and strength are common, impacting the ability get into certain positions and/or moving during sexual activity.
 - It could be helpful to use different sexual aides/devices for positioning.
- Sexual desire might decrease, increase, or stay the same.
- Changes in sexual excitement or physical arousal are common.
 - It might be harder to orgasm or get an erection.
- Hormonal related to production of sex hormones are often experienced.
- Increased fatigue/tiredness is also common.
 - It could be helpful to have sex in the morning or earlier in the day when you have more energy.
 - Some sex positions may be more tiring than others.
- Reproductive changes might occur.
 - Women frequently experience irregular periods and men experience reduced sperm production, making it more difficult to become pregnant or get someone pregnant.



Thinking and Emotional changes:

- Decreased self-esteem or self-value is common.
- Changes in communication can be challenging.
 - It might be hard for you to say what you want or need.
 - It might be hard for you to understand what others want or need.
- Changes in social skills are common.
- Responding to or initiating sexual advances could be difficult.
- Using social cues and paying attention during sex could change the way you interact with your partner or future partners.
- You may think, feel, and act differently now and it could be helpful to find new ways to explore your sexuality.

Family changes:

Relationships shift and intimacy might look a little different than before your injury.

- Holding hands, kissing, or hugging might feel different.
- It might be more difficult to find intimacy due to fear, risk of medical complications, or other factors.
- Navigating role changes between partner, patient, and caregiver can be challenging for you and your partner.
- Individual stress and family stress can impact sexuality as well.
 - Other stressors include finances, work, and relationships.
- Different cultures, experiences, and religions may also impact how we think about sex and intimacy following disability.

If you have questions or are having difficulties around your sexuality or sexual relations, please talk to your doctor, nurse, therapist, or psychologist. **Help is available.** You can read more information about sexuality after brain injury provided by Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems at: <http://www.msctc.org/tbi/factsheets/Sexuality-After-Traumatic-Brain-Injury>

Additional Comments: