

GUIDELINES FOR SEXUAL ACTIVITY

1. TALK to your partner about your likes and dislikes in your sexual relationship. **OPEN COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL.**

People often react to illness by withdrawing into themselves.

They feel that their partner would feel burdened by sharing their fears, the result is that each partner is left to cope alone. All illness is accompanied by anxiety, why not share the load together rather than separately?

Sexual sharing is one way for a couple to feel intimate during the stress of an illness.

State your feelings positively, for example "I really miss our sex life." Rather than being accusing "You never touch me anymore."

2. PLAN sex at a time when your symptoms are likely to be minimal.

For example, 20 minutes after your aerosol bronchodilator.

In the afternoon or anytime that you are relatively free of symptoms.

Many couples believe that sex should be on the spur of the moment with little advanced planning. During and after illness a couple needs to schedule some relaxed time together to start their lovemaking gradually.

3. AVOID sex when you are fatigued, have a chest infection, after a heavy meal or after a large amount of alcohol ingestion.

4. DO NOT RUSH use a slow deliberate approach.

Use relaxation techniques to reduce anxiety before sex, listen to favourite music, take a bath (together or separately), have one or two glasses of wine

5. BE FLEXIBLE, try different body positions, for example side by side, sitting and standing.

The partner with a lung condition may conserve energy by using a secure stationary position. The other partner may be positioned superiorly and should be free to perform most of the body movement.

6. EXPRESS your feelings and affection in a variety of ways such as, handholding, caressing, hugging, stroking, body massage, oral-genital sex or any other techniques pleasurable to both of you.

7. OXYGEN devices can be left on if you are dependent on oxygen.

Oxygen via nasal prongs is a convenient method to use during sexual activity.

8. KISSING should be avoided when it interferes with breathing.

9. SELF-ESTEEM can be rebuilt. Self-Esteem can be likened to a collection of bank accounts. One account contains the net worth of your physical self, what your body can do and how you look. The second account is your social self - how easily you get along with others and the emotional support you can

count on. In the third account is the sum total of your achieving self - what you have accomplished in school, work, and personal and family relationships. The fourth account is for your spiritual self - religious and moral beliefs and the strength they lend you. During your life you make deposits in your accounts, but when a crisis, as in ill health occurs, you must also make withdrawals. Your condition has costs in terms of your physical ability to function, your relationships with others, your work goals, and sometimes your faith in the "fairness" of life. When one of your accounts becomes low in funds, you may need a "loan" from one of the others to balance your account. Try to be aware of the costs of your condition. Make a special effort to get new deposits for the accounts that remain active, so that a drain from one area of your self-worth does not bankrupt you entirely. If your condition has affected your sexual capacities turn your attention to the caring you receive from family and friends. If your work has been interrupted, use some of your energy to enrich your social life or your spiritual life. Although you may feel that all your resources are dwindling, a more careful accounting should reveal some areas where income is still flowing in.

10.MEDICATION adjustments may be necessary if your symptoms continue to interrupt your sexual activity. Talk to your doctor if necessary.