

## **Gynecological cancer and sexuality**

Sexuality is one of humanity's basic drives and an important aspect of life, health, and mental health. Every one of us experiences sexuality in their own way and it changes throughout different stages of life and different life situations. Everyone has a right to sexuality that reflects their life and wishes. Sex and lovemaking are only one aspect of sexuality. Sexuality is also intimacy, tenderness, companionship, loving and being loved.

Cancer does not remove your sexuality, but it can paralyze it for a long period of time and change it mentally and physically. Challenges caused by the disease are common. Gynecological cancer and the treatments used can cause changes in self-confidence, self-image, and in intimate relationships. In addition, it often affects functional aspects of sexuality, like intercourse or masturbation. Loss of sexual desire is normal, particularly in the beginning of the illness and during treatment. Loss of desire can be caused by the crisis caused by the disease, depression, harsh treatments, fear of losing sexuality, changes in self-image, difficulties in intimate relationship, and fear of unsuccessful intercourse. Recovering from surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy takes a lot of energy and causes fatigue and nausea. The treatments can also cause vaginal dryness, loss of sensation around the vagina, or narrowing of the vagina.

Being able to talk about your fears and feelings with your partner is good, because sex is an important aspect of an intimate relationship. We also recommend that you talk about your problems with the doctor and the staff responsible for your care. It is also possible to talk to a sexual counsellor or sexual therapist alone or together with your partner to discuss any questions related to sexuality. You can also share thoughts on starting a new relationship during your appointments with us. You can bring up any questions you might have regarding sexuality, and it is completely confidential. You can call and arrange an appointment yourself, or you can ask a nurse or a doctor to arrange an appointment for you.

### **Sexual health clinic, appointments and inquiries**

Tyks Majakka Hospital Turku, Gynaecological outpatient clinic, **phone 02 313 1322**

- Appointments Monday to Friday from 1 to 3 PM.
- Nurse, Monday to Friday from 8 AM to 3 PM.

You can also leave a callback request for a sexual counsellor or a sexual therapist.