

**A
Behavioral Guide
To Good Sex
After
Transurethral Prostatectomy**



Eva Libman, Ph.D & Catherine Fichten, Ph.D

in collaboration with the
Sexual Dysfunction Service of the
Sir Mortimer B. Davis - Jewish General Hospital
Montreal, Quebec

1989

A BEHAVIORAL GUIDE TO GOOD SEX
AFTER PROSTATECTOMY

SOME GENERAL INFORMATION

There should be no physical reason for men to experience difficulties with erections as a result of a prostate operation since transurethral prostatectomy (TUR) does not disturb the nerves associated with erection. Nevertheless, some studies have shown that erection difficulties occasionally occur following prostatectomy. When this happens, it is usually due to fears and misunderstanding. For example, sometimes couples are worried about resuming sexual activity. They might be afraid that this can harm the penis or that the male might experience pain if the couple engages in intercourse. Sometimes there have been some sexual or marital problems before the surgery. This could interfere with good sexual functioning after the surgery as well.

DÉPÔT LÉGAL
Biblio. Nationale du Qué.
2e trimestre, 1989
ISBN: 2-9801564-1-8

By suggesting that couples abstain from intercourse the intention is to get rid of these worries (since intercourse is the only sexual activity which requires a firm erection). This then opens the door for the couple to enjoy making love while removing the pressure to "perform" sexually.

Most people can enjoy forms of love-making other than intercourse. Some of these activities might include: gently massaging and caressing each other's bodies, kissing or orally stimulating one's partner's body, exploring and discovering where certain types of touch make one feel particularly responsive, and touching the genitals. It is important to simply enjoy the feelings and the sense of learning and exploration. If an erection occurs it should simply be accepted and enjoyed. There is no need to proceed to intercourse yet.

One or both partners may wish to continue making love until climax is reached. There is nothing wrong with doing this and each partner should use his/her own feelings as a guide. However, even when both partners

wish to reach orgasm and feel that intercourse is possible, they should not try to engage in intercourse during the second month after surgery.

Instead, couples should communicate clearly about what kind of sexual touching each partner enjoys. Each partner should guide and teach the other about his or her preferences in non-intercourse caressing. Time to relax and enjoy the pleasures one's body can bring without the pressure of having to engage in intercourse is a pleasant experience for most couples.

THIRD MONTH. By the third month, if both partners are feeling relaxed and comfortable with each other sexually, they may include intercourse in their love-making if they would like to do so. Should any difficulty with erections be experienced at any time, the couple must avoid trying hard to "make it work". Instead they should go back to non-intercourse love-making for a while to reduce pressure and enhance pleasure.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) During the first month after surgery, the couple refrain from highly arousing sexual activities and, instead, enjoy more gentle, pleasurable, affectionate kinds of touching.
- 2) During the second month after surgery, the couple should continue to abstain from sexual intercourse and, instead, enjoy forms of love-making other than intercourse. Orgasm for one or both partners is permissible if desired - in this case manual or oral stimulation may be used.
- 3) During the third month, intercourse may be included in love-making if both partners wish to do so.

Following these suggestions during the first few months after prostate surgery can help couples to enjoy pleasurable sex in the months and years ahead. In the event that sexual difficulties are experienced and the couple feels the need for additional help, one might speak to one's physician or contact a sex therapy service.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet was made possible by a grant from the Conseil Québécois de la Recherche Sociale. Reproduction of this booklet is permitted provided that the source is acknowledged.

Some of the ideas in this booklet were derived from: BARBACH, L. & LEVINE, L. (1981), Shared Intimacies: Women's Sexual Experiences, Toronto: Bantam Books, and ZILBERGELD, B. (1978), Male Sexuality. Toronto: Bantam Books.