

70 percent of women likely to experience sexual problems after breast cancer

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A new study published in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* looked at whether women were more likely to experience sexual problems after breast cancer. The results showed that 70% of women were facing sexual function problems approximately two years post diagnosis.

Mary Panjari, PhD, of the Women's Health Program at Monash University, reported on the sexual well-being nearly two years after diagnosis and initial treatment of participants in the BUPA Foundation Health and Wellbeing after [Breast Cancer](#) Study which involves approximately 1,700 breast cancer survivors.

Over 80% of all the women in the study described their sex life before breast cancer as good and satisfying. Amongst the partnered women aged 70 years or younger, with no active disease, 70% were experiencing [sexual function](#) problems.

Many of the women who experienced [sexual problems](#) had concerns about their [body image](#) after breast cancer. Also, specific treatments for breast cancer were more likely to be associated with menopausal symptoms, which can contribute to sexual problems.

Vasomotor symptoms are menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats. Adjuvant endocrine therapy describes the treatment of hormone receptor positive breast cancer with additional hormone drugs, after surgery and radiotherapy, in order to help stop the disease from coming back.

Adjuvant endocrine therapies, in particular aromatase inhibitors, can exacerbate these menopausal symptoms and affect sexual function. In women who were not on endocrine therapy, there was no association between [sexual dysfunction](#) and vasomotor symptoms.

"Women who have been diagnosed and treated for breast cancer still require support to maintain health and well-being after breast cancer," Panjari concludes. "As women now remain on aromatase inhibitors for longer periods, sexual function problems are likely to become more common amongst breast cancer survivors."

Provided by Wiley

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