

# Managing Male Hormonal Side Effects During Cancer Treatment

Cancer treatments—especially hormone therapy, chemotherapy, radiation, steroids, and immunotherapy—can affect your hormones. These changes are very common and treatable. The information below is intended for men who may be experiencing these side effects.

## Why hormonal changes happen

Some cancer treatments lower or change hormones like testosterone, cortisol, or thyroid hormones. These hormones help control:

- Energy
- Sex drive
- Mood
- Muscle and bone strength
- Weight
- Metabolism

When treatments disrupt these systems, symptoms may appear.

## Common hormonal side effects

### Low Testosterone–Related Symptoms

- Hot flashes
- Low sex drive
- Erectile difficulty
- Fatigue or low energy
- Mood changes (irritability, sadness)
- Muscle loss or weight gain
- Thinning bones (osteoporosis)

### Metabolic Changes

- Higher blood sugar
- Increased cholesterol
- Weight gain around the abdomen

### Breast Changes

- Breast tenderness
- Mild swelling (gynecomastia)

For more information and helpful videos, visit [echoassociates.org/education](https://echoassociates.org/education)



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## Thyroid or Adrenal Changes

(Some immunotherapy or long-term steroid use)

- Feeling unusually tired
- Weight changes
- Feeling cold or hot easily
- Dizziness or weakness

## Ways to manage these symptoms

### 1. Hot Flashes

- Keep room cool, dress in layers
- Avoid triggers like alcohol, caffeine, spicy food
- Medications your doctor may recommend: venlafaxine, gabapentin, or clonidine

### 2. Sexual Health

- Medications for erectile dysfunction
- Vacuum erection devices
- Open conversations with your partner
- Counseling if needed—sexual changes are medical, not your fault

### 3. Mood & Energy

- Light exercise, even walking
- Support groups
- Counseling or medication if needed
- Good sleep routines

### 4. Bone Health

- Calcium + vitamin D
- Weight-bearing exercise
- Bone density testing
- Medications to strengthen bones (bisphosphonates or denosumab)

### 5. Metabolic Health

- Heart-healthy diet (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein)
- Regular exercise
- Monitoring blood sugar and cholesterol
- Medications like statins or metformin when appropriate

### 6. Thyroid or Adrenal Problems

If you experience unusual fatigue, dizziness, or temperature changes, your doctor may check thyroid or adrenal hormones. These conditions are treatable with medication.

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## Lifestyle tips that make a big difference

- Exercise: improves mood, energy, bone health, and weight
- Eat well: small, balanced meals; stay hydrated
- Limit alcohol & tobacco
- Stay connected: emotional support improves outcomes
- Track symptoms: bring notes to appointments

## When to call your doctor

### Contact your ECHO care team if you notice:

- Severe fatigue
- Dizziness, fainting, or weakness
- Depression or major mood changes
- New bone pain
- Breast swelling that becomes painful
- Sudden weight changes
- Hot flashes that interfere with sleep or daily life

## Remember

- ✓ Hormonal changes are common during cancer treatment
- ✓ These side effects are manageable
- ✓ You are not alone, and these symptoms are not a personal failure
- ✓ Early treatment can prevent long-term issues

Your care team is here to support you—physically, mentally, and emotionally—as you go through treatment.