

Tips for care providers working with AYAs around oncofertility

Treatment may affect the ability of adolescents and young adults (AYAs) to have children in the future. All AYAs and people of childbearing age need to have conversations about fertility and family planning. This tip sheet offers guidance from AYAs to care providers to help navigate these conversations. For more information on fertility preservation options, processes, risks, and costs, please see: the ideal care pathway and brochures (assigned male at birth, assigned female at birth).

1. Nothing about me, without me – include AYAs in decisions that affect them AYAs recognize there is tension between medical urgency and patient autonomy AND they want to be involved in conversations about their fertility and care. Engage AYAs in decisions that affect them and don't assume their fertility and treatment desires (wanting/not wanting children/more children). *"We want to be part of decisions that affect us. Don't make this decision for me. I must be part of the process."*

2. Recognize cancer and fertility can be overwhelming for AYAs When having conversations with AYAs about fertility, acknowledge the challenges they may be facing and help to normalize.

3. Be aware of the unique identities and needs Each AYA is unique, as is their care and support. Learn about who they are, their life stage and the many ways they identify (sex, gender, culture, race, ability/disability, etc.). Tailor their care accordingly. *"Remember not all AYAs are the same. We are each our own unique selves."*

4. Provide clear information and timelines AYAs want to understand how treatment affects fertility (including medically induced menopause), the options for fertility preservation, the pros and cons, the long-term implications, timelines, costs and when decisions need to be made. *"Be upfront about the impact to my future capacity to have a family – we can handle it, and it is better to know."*

5. Ensure AYAs have all the information they need to make informed decisions If you don't have the answers to help the AYA make an informed decision, refer them to someone who does and/or can offer the support they need.

6. Give space and time to make decisions AYAs want time and space to process information and make decisions without pressure, and they want accessible and appropriate support.

7. Ensure AYAs feel supported When engaging with AYAs about fertility and cancer, ensure AYAs are connected to the people they need to feel supported (e.g. Patient and Family Counselling, Indigenous navigation, fertility counsellor, etc.). Provide referrals for support.

8. Provide AYAs opportunities for both private and conversations with family There can be complex family and cultural dynamics around fertility and treatment discussions. Create opportunities for both private and conversations with family (especially for younger AYAs) and be mindful of family and cultural considerations. Engage colleagues to support as needed.

9. Provide more than one opportunity to discuss and revisit treatment and fertility preservation options For many this is not a one-off conversation. Please refer to the ideal care pathway for guidance on conversations timing and prompts.

10. Document, review and communicate with care team Poor coordination between providers creates significant burden for AYAs, and AYAs feel frustrated when they are repeatedly asked the same questions. Use the patient chart to document. Review key information and decisions.

11. Recognize the long-term impact of fertility decisions Fertility decisions have long-term impact and can affect survivorship and quality of life. Acknowledge this and ensure AYAs have the information, resources and support to navigate life beyond cancer.

12. Use Suitable Means to Communicate with AYAs Consider how you can communicate via text or email to share information and resources.

13. Remember, AYAs need advocates The cancer care system is not designed for young people. Be an advocate for AYAs as they navigate fertility and cancer care broadly. Connect them with resources and supports, and advocate for AYA specific programming and services.