

Erectile Dysfunction

SEXUAL HEALTH SERIES

WHAT IS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION?

Studies show that about one half of American men over age 40 have a problem getting or keeping an erection that's firm enough for sexual satisfaction. Most men have difficulties with erections from time to time. In some men, it is a regular, more severe problem known as erectile dysfunction, or ED.

WHAT CAUSES ED?

While ED becomes more common as men age, growing old is not the cause of the problem. ED can be an early warning sign of a more serious illness. Diagnosing and treating the condition that causes ED can improve your overall well-being, as well as help restore your sexual health.

ED can result from physical, medical or psychological factors, or a combination of factors. Heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, surgery, injuries and even smoking can reduce blood flow or damage nerves in the penis. Some prescription and over-the-counter medications, as well as alcohol or other drugs, may cause erectile difficulties as a side effect. Many emotional (depression, stress or anxiety) or relationship problems can cause or worsen ED. A medical professional diagnoses ED through a physical examination.

HOW IS ED TREATED?

To improve erectile function your doctor may treat underlying causes. These may include recommending you change certain habits, such as stopping drug or alcohol use. Treating mental health problems, such as relationship conflicts, depression or performance anxiety can also help. If ED is a side effect of a prescribed medication you are taking, your doctor may be able to adjust the dose of your medication or switch you to a different drug. Do not stop taking your medicine or change any medications without talking to your doctor first. If a blood test shows low testosterone levels testosterone replacement therapy may help.

Other treatment options include:

- Oral medications known as phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE-5) inhibitors, which relax muscle cells in the penis for better blood flow. This produces a rigid erection when sexual stimulation occurs.
- A vacuum erection device which draws blood into the penis, causing an erection to form. Once an erection occurs, an elastic ring at the base of the penis holds the blood in the penis for up to 30 minutes.
- Self-injection therapy which uses a fine needle to place a small amount of medication into the base of the penis before sexual activity to produce an erection.

FACT SHEET

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www.UrologyHealth.org or contact:

American Urological Association Foundation
1000 Corporate Boulevard, Linthicum, MD 21090
Phone: 1-800-828-7866 or 410-689-3700

- With intraurethral therapy, a man inserts a tiny medicated pellet of alprostadil into his urethra to create an erection.
- A urologist can surgically insert one of two types of penile implants.

Ask your doctor which treatment is right for you. Popular natural or herbal medications and supplements claim to promote sexual health and improve erectile function. Check with your doctor

before you take any over-the-counter supplements or medications to treat your ED.

The good news for many men is that ED can be treated, safely and effectively. If you have ED, there is hope. There is help. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if one of these options will work for you.

This urologic information was provided to you by:

For more information about ED, please visit the AUA Foundation's website, **www.UrologyHealth.org** or call the National Urology Health Line at 1-800-828-7866 for assistance in English and Spanish.

The AUA Foundation is the world's leading non-profit urologic health foundation and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. Our mission is to promote health, provide hope and promise a future free from urologic diseases, including cancer.

This information is based on current medical and scientific knowledge and is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please see your urologist or other healthcare provider regarding any health concerns and always consult a healthcare professional before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

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