

Erectile dysfunction

Urology

What is erectile dysfunction?

Erectile dysfunction is the persistent inability to get or maintain an erection that is sufficient for successful sexual intercourse.

What causes erectile dysfunction?

Erectile dysfunction is not a disease, although it can be a side effect of other illness or due to a psychological problem. Erectile dysfunction may also be an early sign of cardiovascular / diabetic disease and may need investigation before you commence any treatment for your erections.

Psychological issues including Depression and anxiety are the main cause of erectile dysfunction.

Physical causes (within the body) include:

- **Vasculogenic** - conditions effecting blood supply to the penis such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure
- **Neurogenic** - conditions affecting your nervous system, which is made up of your brain, nerves and spinal cord, such as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and stroke
- **Hormonal** - conditions affecting your hormone levels such as hypogonadism (a condition that affects the production of the male sex hormone)
- **Medications** such as, antiandrogens, anticonvulsants, anti-hypertensives, antipsychotics and antidepressants
- **Pelvic surgery or penile injuries**
- **Anatomical** - conditions affecting the physical structure of your penis.

An erection results from a complex interaction between muscles, nerves, blood vessels and various other psychological and behavioural influences. If a problem occurs with one of these processes, the ability to get or maintain an erection may be impaired. At your consultation, your healthcare practitioner will discuss with you your possible individual causes.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Is there a cure for erectile dysfunction?

Erectile dysfunction can have a significant impact on the quality of your life and relationships. There are various treatments available, which can provide you with a good quality erection for successful sexual intercourse. Unfortunately, there is no single cure for erectile dysfunction, but your healthcare practitioner will discuss which treatment options are best for you.

What treatments are available?

There are various treatment options available for erectile dysfunction. You may not be suitable for all options and this will be discussed with you by your healthcare practitioner.

Oral therapy / tablets – You may not be suitable to take tablets for your erectile dysfunction, if you have an underlying heart disease such as angina and already take tablets which belong to a group of medications called nitrates. Your healthcare practitioner will discuss this with you.

Erectile dysfunction tablets are called PDE5 Inhibitors and temporarily increase the blood flow to the penis. There are several brands of medication to try and most are required to be taken prior to sexual intercourse. There is still a requirement for physical stimulation to promote the effect of the medication. Your healthcare practitioner will discuss these with you and how they work in your clinic appointment.

Common side effects of these tablets include headaches, visual disturbances, and hot flushes. Your GP may have prescribed these tablets for you before your referral to the urology clinic.

Penile injection – You may not be suitable for penile injections if you are already taking medication to thin your blood such as warfarin and clopidogrel. Your healthcare practitioner will discuss this with you.

Penile injections are man-made compounds to stimulate blood flow to the penis. Prior to using an injection, you will be taught how to mix the medication and self-inject into the side of the penis. Injections are the most effective method of achieving an erection. The penis can become rigid within 10-15 minutes and can last up to 1 hour. Following ejaculation (when semen is released from the penis)/ orgasm the effect of the medication will wear off and the erection will disappear and become flaccid.

Common side effects include changes in blood pressure, dizziness, headaches, pain to the penis, and bleeding and swelling at the injection site. Priapism is a condition in which the penis becomes hard and does not become soft again within 4-6 hours. This is because the blood is unable to flow back out of the penis. It is very important that you inform either your healthcare practitioner or attend accident and emergency if your erection lasts beyond 6 hours. You will be given further information about priapism at the time of your appointment.

Penile injections must be tried and demonstrated within the urology clinic. This cannot be prescribed until your GP has received correspondence from the urology clinic informing them of the dose and stating you are safe and competent to use them.

Vacuum Therapy – This is a non-invasive treatment, whereby an erection is produced by creating a vacuum around the penis using a vacuum pump device. This results in the blood being drawn into the penis, which immediately enlarges. The erection is maintained by the use of a constriction band worn at the base of the penis. Good manual dexterity is required to use this method successfully. Most patients can achieve an erection good enough for sexual intercourse within 5 minutes and the band should be removed after 30 minutes.

Common side effects include a cold feeling penis after an erection has occurred and discolouration to the penis whilst the band is in place.

If vacuum therapy is appropriate for you, your healthcare practitioner will arrange a further appointment for you with the product specialist. This may be a virtual telephone appointment. The product specialist will discuss with you how the device works and you will have the opportunity to be sent a video to watch regarding how to use the device also.

These devices cost around £150, therefore we would like you to be completely happy with the outcome before purchasing one. If you are entitled to a specialist erectile dysfunction prescription on the NHS, then these pumps are prescribed by your GP and you would only pay the standard prescription charge.

Vacuum devices recommended from the hospital are classed as medical devices and have undergone medical testing. Cheaper devices are available to buy from online stores but these are not classed as medical devices and often do not give the desired effect. We do not advocate the purchase of a vacuum device from a non-recommended medical source.

Hormone replacement – A deficiency of the male hormone testosterone can contribute towards erectile dysfunction. If your testosterone level is low, you may need referral to an Endocrinologist who may offer you hormone replacement which comes in the form of patches or gels. This will be discussed with you by your healthcare professional, if required.

Penile prosthesis – These are rods placed inside the penis under a general anaesthetic. There are two types: semi-rigid flexible rods, which remain in the penis, are bent upwards when an erection is required, and bend down out of the way when not required; the other type is inflatable. Again, they remain in the penis with a pump inserted in the scrotum. When an erection is required, the pump is activated in the scrotum.

Insertion of any penile prosthesis results in the destruction of erectile tissue and should only be considered when all other options have been tried. There is a chance the body can reject the implants or become infected, which would then require the removal of the prosthesis. The other treatment options CANNOT be tried afterwards.

This surgery is very specialised and not carried out at The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust. Referral for penile prosthesis would need to be made to a specialist centre for this surgery. Your local healthcare clinical commissioning group would then be consulted regarding funding this operation.

Do I have to pay for treatment?

The NHS has a limited budget for drug therapy, which means doctors and health authorities are under pressure to stay within certain financial limits. In order to help them do this, the Government has decided to use a system for prescribing called 'Schedule 11' for all impotence treatments. Schedule 11 is different to the way your GP prescribes any other treatment, in that only certain groups of patients are allowed to have impotence treatment on the NHS.

Sildenafil is the only treatment available freely on the NHS for anyone with erectile dysfunction.

The Department of Health Guidelines state that in order to receive any of the other treatments, patients need to have one of the following conditions. A healthcare practitioner or GP cannot change this decision.

You will be eligible for other impotence free treatments if you have one of the following conditions:

- Diabetes
- Multiple sclerosis
- Spinal cord injury
- Prostate cancer
- Renal failure treated by dialysis or transplant
- Single gene neurological disease
- Poliomyelitis
- Spina Bifida
- Parkinson's disease
- Radical pelvic surgery
- Removal of the prostate (prostatectomy)
- Radiotherapy.

If you were diagnosed as suffering from erectile dysfunction and receiving treatment for it on the NHS before 14th September 1998, you will be able to continue receiving treatment on the NHS freely.

For those patients not entitled to receive other erectile dysfunction treatments on the NHS, your GP can still offer you a private prescription but cannot charge you for writing the prescription. When you take this to a chemist for dispensing, you will have to pay the full cost of the treatment and not the NHS prescription charge. Costs can vary greatly and it is advisable that you ask a couple of different chemists what the charge is before you hand over the prescription.

What can I do to help myself?

Erectile dysfunction can be helped by making lifestyle changes. These include,

- Giving up smoking
- Reducing alcohol intake
- Regular exercise
- Losing weight
- Not taking illegal drugs
- Stress management.

These changes may not resolve your erectile dysfunction completely but can have a good impact on your general health and may contribute towards better penile health.

For further information please contact the Urology Nurse Specialists on 01902 694467.

Other useful contacts

British Society for Sexual Medicine

Holly Cottage, Fisherwick, Near Lichfield,
Staffordshire WS14 9JL

Phone: 01543 432757 / 432622

Online: <http://www.bssm.org.uk/>

The Sexual Advice Association

Sexual Advice Association c/o Right Angle

224, Building 3, Chiswick Park

566 Chiswick High Road

London W4 5YA

Phone: 0207 486 7262

Online : <http://sexualadviceassociation.co.uk/>

RELATE - The relationship people

National helpline : 0300 100 1234

Online : <https://www.relate.org.uk>

British Diabetic Association

10 Queen Anne Street

London

W1M 0MD

Phone: 020 7636 6112

Online: <http://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。