

INSTRUCTION SHEET: ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION (ED)

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed erectile dysfunction.

What is erectile dysfunction?

Erectile dysfunction is when a man can't get an erection to have sex or can't keep an erection long enough to finish having sex. (It used to be called impotence). Erectile dysfunction can occur at age, but it is more common in men older than 75 years of age.

Is erectile dysfunction just a part of old age?

Erectile dysfunction doesn't have to be a part of getting older. It's true that as you get older, you may need more stimulation (such as stroking and touching) to get an erection. You might also need more time between erections. But older men should still be able to get an erection and enjoy sex

What causes erectile dysfunction?

Erectile dysfunction can be caused by:

- Diabetes (high blood sugar)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Stress, anxiety or depression
- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Some prescription medications, such as antidepressants, pain medicine and medicine for high blood pressure
- Fatigue
- Brain or spinal-cord injuries
- Hypogonadism (which leads to lower testosterone levels)
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Radiation therapy to the testicles
- Stroke
- Some types of prostate or bladder surgery

If you can't keep your blood sugar or your blood pressure under control, you can get erectile dysfunction. It's important that you take your medicines for these problems just the way your doctor tells you.

Sometimes your hormones get out of balance and this causes erectile dysfunction. Your doctor will decide if you need blood tests to check your hormones.

Some medicines can cause erectile dysfunction. If this is true for you, your doctor may take you off that medicine or give you a different one.

Drinking too much alcohol, smoking too much and abusing drugs can also cause erectile dysfunction.

Problems in your relationship with your sexual partner can also cause erectile dysfunction. Improving your relationship may help your sex life. If you decide to seek therapy, it will probably be most effective if your sex partner is included. Couples can learn new ways to please one another and to show affection. This can reduce anxiety about having erections.

Feelings that can lead to erectile dysfunction

- Feeling nervous about sex, perhaps because of a bad experience or because of a previous episode of impotence
- Feeling stressed, including stress from work or family situations
- Being troubled by problems in your relationship with your sex partner
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling so self-conscious that you can't enjoy sex
- Thinking that your partner is reacting negatively to you

How is erectile dysfunction diagnosed?

Your doctor will probably start by asking you some questions and doing a physical exam. Samples of your blood and urine may be tested for diseases and disorders. Other tests may also be needed. Your doctor will determine which tests are right for you.

How is erectile dysfunction treated?

The treatment for erectile dysfunction depends on what is causing it. After your doctor checks you for medical problems and medicines that might cause erectile dysfunction, he or she may have you try a medicine to help with erectile dysfunction. Sildenafil (brand name: Viagra), tadalafil and vardenafil are medicines that are taken by mouth that help maintain an erection. Not everyone can use these medicines. Your doctor may talk to you about alprostadil if oral medicines aren't an option for you. Alprostadil is a synthetic version of prostaglandin E. It can be injected into the penis or inserted as a tiny suppository into the urethra. Your doctor will help you decide which treatment is best for you.

How should I take sildenafil?

Follow your doctor's instructions. Usually, a man takes 1 tablet 30 minutes to 1 hour before he plans to have sex. You should not take more than 1 tablet in 24 hours. The medicine comes in tablets of 25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg. Most patients start with 50 mg.

Even if you take sildenafil, you still need physical and mental stimulation and desire to have an erection. If your first dose of Viagra doesn't help, call your doctor. Your doctor may want to change

your tablet strength.

What are the side effects?

Sildenafil has some common side effects:

- Headache
- Flushing (face and upper body turning red and warm)
- Stomach upset
- Runny nose (sniffles)
- Vision changes (things look blue)

Headache is the most common side effect. Vision changes are the least common. Talk to your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you.

Call your doctor right away if you take sildenafil and have a prolonged erection that lasts 4 hours or longer. This condition may cause permanent impotence if not treated.

Can everyone use sildenafil?

No. You shouldn't use this medicine if you take nitroglycerin or any other nitrates for chest pain. If you have heart problems, tell your doctor before taking sildenafil. This medicine can have serious side effects in people who have heart problems.

If you use sildenafil and get chest pains, be sure to tell the paramedics, nurses or doctors at the hospital that you use it and when you used it last.

You also shouldn't take sildenafil if you are taking other medicines for erectile dysfunction.

What other options do I have?

If the medicines aren't right for you, you could also try using a penile implant, vacuum pump devices, or you could have surgery. Your doctor may send you to an urologist to talk about these options.

Source:

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