

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Erectile Dysfunction

There are many ways to treat ED.¹ Losing weight, getting more exercise or quitting smoking may help.² For many men, the answer may be taking medicine.

At the Doctor's Office:

The doctor will ask you questions. Some of these will be about your health and your sex life.¹ It is best to be honest so your doctor can find out what is causing this. The doctor may also³:

- Do an exam of your genitals
- Measure blood pressure in your legs
- Do an exam of your rectum
- Do blood tests

All men have trouble getting or keeping an erection once in a while. This is normal. When it happens often or all the time, it is called “erectile dysfunction” (ih-REK-tel dis-FUNK-shen), or ED.³

ED is when you have trouble getting or keeping an erection. ED becomes more common as you get older. But it is not a natural part of aging.

Some people have trouble talking with their doctors about sex. But it is important to do so. ED can be a sign of other health problems. It may mean your blood vessels are clogged. It may mean you have nerve damage from diabetes. It may be related to high blood pressure or high cholesterol. It is important to find out what is causing your ED.

What Causes ED?

Blood Flow

For the penis to become erect enough, blood needs to flow into the penis. There also needs to be a slowing of the blood that flows out of the penis.³

Problems with blood flow can cause ED. Decreased blood flow can be caused by³:

- Narrowed blood vessels
- Blood clots
- Diabetes

Nerve Damage

Damage to nerves that go to or from the penis can cause ED. Such damage might be caused by³:

- Prostate surgery
- Stroke
- Disease of the spine
- Alcohol
- Diabetes
- Medicine
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)



Erectile Dysfunction

Prescribed Drugs

Certain drugs have side effects that can cause ED.

Prescribed drugs are a leading cause of ED.¹ These include³:

- Drugs for high blood pressure
- Drugs for depression
- Some sedatives
- Digoxin

Sometimes if you stop taking a drug, erections are improved.³ Don't stop taking a drug unless your doctor tells you it's safe.

Other Causes

Some other things that can play a role in ED are³:

- Illness
- Being depressed
- Stress with your partner or at work
- Low levels of the male hormone "testosterone" (tes-TOSS-ter-OWN).

Treatment for ED. It is Very Important to Talk With Your Doctor Before Starting Any Treatment.

Current Medicine: Sometimes a certain medicine causes ED. If the medicine is stopped, erections can be improved. Never stop taking a medicine unless your doctor tells you it is okay.

New Medicine:

- Medicines that increase blood flow to the penis ordered by your doctor. Some of these drugs are taken by mouth. Some of them you inject or insert into the penis.
- Taking the male hormone testosterone. This comes in the form of pills, creams, or injections. It is ordered by your doctor.

Other Treatments

- Using bands and rings that constrict (squeeze) the penis. They are placed at the base of the penis to slow the blood flowing out.
- Vacuum pumps that draw blood into the penis.
- Surgery in which an implant is put into the penis.
- Counseling.

Sources

1. The Patient Education Institute. X-Plain Erectile Dysfunction. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/erectiledysfunctionyourchoices/or029202.pdf>
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