

Preventing Erectile Dysfunction

What You Should Know

Urology Care
FOUNDATION™
*The Official Foundation of the
 American Urological Association*

WHAT IS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION (ED)?

About one half of American men over age 40 have erection problems. Most men have problems with erections from time to time. But some men have erectile dysfunction, or ED. When you have ED, it is hard to get or keep an erection that's firm enough for sex.

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 sign of a more serious health problem. Finding and treating the cause(s) of your ED can improve your overall health and well-being

ED can result from health or emotional problems, or from both combined. Heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and high blood sugar can reduce blood flow to the penis. This can then cause erection problems. Some life choices can also add to your chances of getting ED. Smoking, drug or alcohol abuse can also limit blood flow to the penis. Lack of exercise and a lifestyle that isn't active can lead to erection problems, also.

Some men cannot keep an erection because blood does not stay trapped in the penis. Certain health problems, injury, surgery or radiation therapy in the pelvic area can harm nerves in the penis.

One more cause of ED is peripheral neuropathy. (This is numbness or tingling, often in hands or feet, sometimes caused by high blood sugar). This disease harms the nerves

Smoking, drinking alcohol excessively, being overweight, and not exercising are possible causes of ED.

that control erection, so they don't send the right signals to the penis. Some emotional (depression, stress or anxiety) or relationship problems can cause or worsen ED. Some medications, as well as alcohol or illegal drugs, can cause erection problems.

HOW CAN YOU LOWER YOUR RISK OF GETTING ED?

Taking active steps to prevent ED may help you keep sexual function. But these tips can also help you lead a healthier life overall:

- Stop smoking
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Avoid excessive drinking (more than two drinks per day)
- Avoid using illegal drugs
- Take medicine as prescribed
- Talk to your doctor about the drugs you are taking. Cutting back or changing some meds can often prevent ED. (But never stop or change any medicine without first talking to your health care provider.)

Preventing Erectile Dysfunction

What You Should Know

- Many people have long-term health problems, like high blood sugar, heart or kidney disease. If you have a chronic illness like this, follow your health care provider's advice to stay healthy.

If you do get ED, talk to your health care provider. To help you find the best cure, your provider will ask you questions about your health, emotional and sexual history. You may also need to take blood or urine tests.

HOW IS ED TREATED?

To improve erection problems, your health care provider may need to treat the root causes. Changing certain habits, such as stopping smoking or drug abuse, may help fix your ED. Emotional problems, depression or performance anxiety can also be treated. Cutting back on or changing certain meds can often improve ED. (Do not stop taking your meds or change your dose without talking to your health care provider first.)

The good news for many men is that ED can be prevented or treated safely. And treatments can work well. If you have ED, there is hope. There is help. Talk to your health care provider about ED prevention and treatment choices.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

- What is ED?
- What causes ED?
- Can ED be prevented?
- Can you help me or do I need to see a specialist in ED? If so, how can I find the right one for me?
- Will I need to have tests to find out what is causing my ED?
- Would you explain each test and why you are recommending them?
- What types of treatment are available for ED?
- Are there side effects from treatment?
- What are the pros and cons of each type of treatment?

- What treatment do you recommend for me and why?
- What happens if the first treatment doesn't help?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I can make that could help my symptoms?

RESOURCES

American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists

Find a certified sex therapist/counselor near you
www.aasect.org, click on "Locate a Professional"

Frank Talk

Peer support to help men deal with ED
www.FrankTalk.org

Help to Quit Smoking

Smokefree.gov or Espanol.Smokefree.gov
NCI's Smoking Quitline: 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848)
State Quitlines: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

Hormone Health Network

In English: www.hormone.org/diseases-and-conditions/mens-health/erectile-dysfunction

In Spanish: www.hormone.org/audiencias/pacientes-y-cuidadores/preguntas-y-respuestas/2012/erectile-dysfunction

National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NKUDIC)

In English: <http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/KUDiseases/pubs/ED/index.aspx>

In Spanish: <http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov/Spanish/pubs/ED/index.aspx>

Sexual Medicine Society of North America

www.sexhealthmatters.org

Urology Care Foundation

UrologyHealth.org

You may download this fact sheet and print it yourself at **UrologyHealth.org/PreventingEDFS**. For copies of printed materials about ED and other urologic conditions, visit **UrologyHealth.org/Order** or call 800-828-7866.