

Evaluating Erectile Dysfunction



Many people feel embarrassed to talk to a healthcare provider about erectile dysfunction (ED). But it's nothing to feel embarrassed about. This common problem can be treated, but only if your provider knows about it. Your provider will likely ask you questions about your ED. Whether you're asked or not, tell your provider anything that might help them understand the problem. Your provider may do an exam and may run some tests to help find the cause of your ED.



A simple exam

A medical exam may help your healthcare provider understand what's causing your problem. ED is sometimes the first sign of some other health problem, so your provider may check your overall health. They may also examine your penis, scrotum, and testicles. Tell your provider about all of the medicines you take. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as any vitamins, herbs, or supplements. Health conditions such as diabetes, chronic kidney disease, depression, and hypogonadism can lead to a decreased sex drive.

You may have some tests

Your healthcare provider may advise some or all of these tests:

- Blood tests measure your levels of hormones or lipids (fatty substances in the blood, including cholesterol). Other tests check for diabetes or help show the health of your liver, kidneys, and prostate.
- Blood flow tests check how well blood moves through your penis.
- A rectal exam checks for an enlarged prostate gland. An enlarged prostate and ED have been linked in recent studies.
- Other tests check for other conditions that limit your ability to have sex.

Your treatment plan

Based on what you say and what any exam shows, your healthcare provider will advise a treatment plan. The first step may be to try ED medicines, since they help most people. If they don't help you, your provider can advise other kinds of treatment. You and your partner may also want to discuss which options would work best in your relationship. Treatment may include addressing the cause of health problems, such as lowering your cholesterol. And talk therapy (counseling) may be advised to talk about underlying emotional issues.

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