



My Health
Digest

Erectile dysfunction

Erectile dysfunction is the inability to get and keep an erection firm enough for sex.

Having erection trouble from time to time isn't necessarily a cause for concern. If erectile dysfunction is an ongoing issue, however, it can cause stress, affect your self-confidence and contribute to relationship problems.

Symptoms

Erectile dysfunction symptoms might include persistent:

- Trouble getting an erection
- Trouble keeping an erection
- Reduced sexual desire

When to see a doctor

A family doctor is a good place to start when you have erectile problems. See your doctor if:

- You have concerns about your erections or you're experiencing other sexual problems such as premature or delayed ejaculation
- You have diabetes, heart disease or another known health condition that might be linked to erectile dysfunction
- You have other symptoms along with erectile dysfunction



Causes

Physical causes of erectile dysfunction

- Heart disease
- Clogged blood vessels (atherosclerosis)
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Metabolic syndrome — a condition involving increased blood pressure, high insulin levels, body fat around the waist and high cholesterol
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Certain prescription medications
- Tobacco use
- Peyronie's disease — development of scar tissue inside the penis
- Alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse
- Sleep disorders
- Treatments for prostate cancer or enlarged prostate
- Surgeries or injuries that affect the pelvic area or spinal cord
- Low testosterone



Psychological causes of erectile dysfunction

- Depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions
- Stress
- Relationship problems due to stress, poor communication or other concerns

Prevention

- Work with your doctor to manage diabetes, heart disease or other chronic health conditions.
- See your doctor for regular checkups and medical screening tests.
- Stop smoking, limit or avoid alcohol, and don't use illegal drugs.
- Exercise regularly.
- Take steps to reduce stress.
- Get help for anxiety, depression or other mental health concerns.

Treatment

Oral medications

Oral medications are a successful erectile dysfunction treatment for many men.



Other medications

Other medications for erectile dysfunction include:

- **Alprostadil self-injection.** With this method, you use a fine needle to inject alprostadil into the base or side of your penis
- **Alprostadil urethral suppository.** Alprostadil intraurethral therapy involves placing a tiny alprostadil suppository inside your penis in the penile urethra. You use a special applicator to insert the suppository into your penile urethra.
- **Testosterone replacement.** Some people have erectile dysfunction that might be complicated by low levels of the hormone testosterone. In this case, testosterone replacement therapy might be recommended as the first step or given in combination with other therapies.

Penis pumps, surgery and implants

If medications aren't effective or appropriate in your case, your doctor might recommend a different treatment. Other treatments include:

- **Penis pumps.** A penis pump (vacuum erection device) is a hollow tube with a hand-powered or battery-powered pump. The tube is placed over your penis, and then the pump is used to suck out the air inside the tube. This creates a vacuum that pulls blood into your penis.
- **Penile implants.** This treatment involves surgically placing devices into both sides of the penis. These implants consist of either inflatable or malleable (bendable) rods. Inflatable devices allow you to control when and how long you have an erection. The malleable rods keep your penis firm but bendable.

