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L-Arginine

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## Erection Problems

Erection problems can be caused by anything that disrupts the sequence of events leading to an erection. The most common cause is other health conditions, such as nerve damage or diabetes. For many men, the answer to their problem is as simple as taking a pill. Other men may require first treating an underlying medical condition.

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### Erection Problems: An Overview

Some people can talk to their doctors about sex without any embarrassment. Others feel that sex is private and do not want to share details with anyone. But if you have erection problems, including getting or keeping an erection, you have two good reasons to talk to a doctor:

- Your health
- Your quality of life.

Erection problems used to be called " **impotence**." Now, the term " **erectile dysfunction**" is more commonly used, and sometimes people simply use the initials **ED**.

Erection problems are a medical problem, and your doctor can help.

### What Causes an Erection?

Hormones, blood vessels, nerves, and muscles must all work together to cause an erection.

Your brain starts an erection by sending nerve signals to the penis when it senses sexual stimulation or arousal. Touching may cause this arousal. Another trigger can be something you see or hear. Or it may simply be a sexual thought or dream.

The nerve signals sent from the brain cause the muscles within the penis to relax and let blood flow into the spongy tissue within the penis. Blood collects in this tissue like water filling a sponge. As a result, the penis becomes larger and firmer, like an inflated balloon. The veins in the area then become closed off to keep blood from flowing out.

After climax, or after the sexual arousal has passed, the veins open back up and blood flows back into the body.

Due to the important role blood vessels play in this process, healthy blood vessels are needed for an erection to occur.

Erection Problems Article Continues on Next Page >

1 2 Next >>

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