

IMPOTENCE

(Erectile Dysfunction)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A consistent inability to sustain an erection as needed for sexual intercourse. Impotence can occur at any age. It is not a normal part of aging (though arousal may normally take longer). Impotence affects millions of men.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Total inability to achieve an erection, an inconsistent ability to do so, or ability to achieve only brief erections.
- Sexual drive and the ability to have an orgasm may not be affected.

CAUSES

An erection requires a sequence of events. It starts with sexual stimulation in the brain, which sends nerve signals to the arteries and muscles of the penis. The penis fills with blood and grows firm and erect. After the stimulation ends, or ejaculation occurs, the blood leaves the penis, and it softens again. With erectile dysfunction, this sequence of events is disrupted. This can be due to physical (most often) or psychological (mental or emotional) factors.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Physical factors may include:

- Diabetes, endocrine disorder, liver or kidney disease.
- Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), heart or blood vessel disease, or high blood pressure.
- Use of some drugs, such as for high blood pressure.
- Disorders or injuries of the central nervous system.
- Alcoholism, smoking, or drugs of abuse.
- Decreased blood flow to the penis from any cause.
- Surgery (such as for heart or blood vessels).
- Prostate cancer treatment.
- Hormone imbalance.

Psychological factors may include:

- Fear of sexual failure or performance anxiety, low self-esteem, or lack of interest in sex.
- Decrease in sexuality in long-term relationship.
- Depression, anxiety, stress, anger, and guilt.
- Fear of disease (such as sexual) or heart attack.
- Other people are around (such as mother-in-law).

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- No specific measures. Some general advice is listed.
- Maintain good health and proper weight.
- Avoid any of the risk factors where possible.
- Control any medical conditions such as diabetes.
- Ask about side effects before taking any new drug.
- Have open communication with your sexual partner.
- Try to avoid worrying about sexual performance.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Impotence is treatable in all age groups. Near normal sexual activity can often be achieved with treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Reduced quality of life for the man and his partner.
- Depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your sexual history. Medical tests may be done to diagnose any underlying disorder.
- Treatment steps may involve lifestyle changes, therapy for any illness diagnosed, erectile dysfunction drugs or devices, counseling, and surgery. A treatment plan will be based on your individual case.
- Lifestyle changes may include cutting back on alcohol, smoking, or drug abuse. Reducing stress, diet changes, and increased exercise may be recommended.
- Counseling can help. It may be for emotional problems (such as stress, anxiety, or guilt). Counseling may involve a sex therapist for you and your partner.
- Use of a vacuum inflation device is an option.
- Surgery for an inflatable or non-inflatable penile implant may be helpful if other methods fail.
- Surgery to improve blood flow to the penis may be recommended if there are blood vessel problems.
- To learn more: Erectile Dysfunction Institute, 10949 Bren Road East, Minnetonka, MN 55343; (866) 563-2432; website: www.erectile-dysfunction-impotence.org.

MEDICATIONS

- Drugs for erectile dysfunction (taken by mouth, self-injected, or by suppository) are often prescribed. For proper and safe use, follow all instructions provided.
- If a drug you take is the cause of impotence, a change in drugs or a change in dosage amounts may be made.
- Drugs may be prescribed for an underlying disorder.

ACTIVITY

No limits. Exercise on a regular basis.

DIET

Eat a well-balanced diet and take vitamins.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of impotence.
- Erectile dysfunction continues despite treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page