

Diagnosing Erectile Dysfunction

SEXUAL HEALTH SERIES

WHAT IS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION?

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is the problem of getting or keeping an erection that's firm enough for sexual satisfaction. ED can result from physical, medical or psychological factors, or a combination of factors. ED can be an early warning sign of a more serious illness, such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes mellitus. *Diagnosing and treating the conditions that cause ED* can improve your overall well-being, as well as help restore your sexual health.

HOW IS ED DIAGNOSED?

If you are not able to have an erection firm enough for sexual satisfaction, you have ED. Finding the cause of the ED will help your healthcare provider determine the best treatment options. Most medical professionals will ask questions about your medical and psychological history, conduct a physical examination and possibly recommend some laboratory tests.

- **Medical and Sexual History:** Questions about your medical history can help identify diseases that may lead to ED, while asking questions about sexual history might help find problems with sexual desire, erection, ejaculation, or orgasm. Using certain prescription or illegal drugs can suggest a chemical cause, since drug effects account for 25 percent of ED cases. Cutting back on or substituting certain medications can often improve ED.
- **Physical Examination:** A physical examination checks overall health and can give clues to the cause of ED.

- **Laboratory Tests:** Tests for possible diseases that cause ED may include blood counts, urinalysis, lipid profile, testosterone levels and other laboratory tests.
- **Psychosocial Examination:** An interview and/or questionnaire can be used to identify psychological factors that may contribute to ED. A man's sexual partner may also be interviewed to determine expectations and perceptions during sexual intercourse.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD YOU GIVE YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?

To help your healthcare professional find the best way to treat your ED, be prepared to answer questions about: your erections, your medical history, any medications and drugs or alcohol you may use. Sometimes these questions may seem personal or embarrassing. Honest answers will help find the cause and best treatment for your ED.

Questions relating to your ED:

- How long have these symptoms been present? Did they begin gradually or suddenly?
- Do you wake up with an erection? How about in the evening?
- If you do have erections, how firm are they? Is penetration difficult?
- Do your erections change at different times such as with different partners, oral stimulation or masturbation?
- Do you have difficulties with sexual desire (libido), arousal, ejaculation, or orgasm (climax)?

FACT SHEET

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THE AMERICAN UROLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

To download a copy of this fact sheet go to www.UrologyHealth.org or contact:

American Urological Association Foundation
1000 Corporate Boulevard, Linthicum, MD 21090
Phone: 1-800-828-7866 or 410-689-3700

- What effect is this problem having on your sexual satisfaction, your sexual confidence, or your relationship if you are in one?

Questions relating to medical factors that could be contributing to ED:

- What medical conditions do you have?
- What medications are you currently taking?
- If and how much do you smoke, drink, or use other drugs?
- Did you have any previous history of surgery or radiation therapy, particularly in the pelvic region?
- Do you experience urinary problems?

Questions relating to psychosocial factors that could be contributing to ED:

- How is your relationship with your partner? Has anything changed recently?
- What is your sex life like? Has anything changed recently?
- In general, are you under a lot of stress? Or has anything particularly upsetting happened to you?
- Do you have any psychological illnesses or depression?

The good news for many men is that ED can be prevented or treated, safely and effectively. If you have ED, there is hope. There is help. Talk to your healthcare provider about ED prevention and treatment options.

This urologic information was provided to you by:

For more information about ED, please visit the AUA Foundation's website, www.UrologyHealth.org or call the National Urology Health Line at 1-800-828-7866 for assistance in English and Spanish.

The AUA Foundation is the world's leading non-profit urologic health foundation and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. Our mission is to promote health, provide hope and promise a future free from urologic diseases, including cancer.

This information is based on current medical and scientific knowledge and is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please see your urologist or other healthcare provider regarding any health concerns and always consult a healthcare professional before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

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