

Erectile Dysfunction: Prevention

Urology Care
FOUNDATION™
*The Official Foundation of the
American Urological Association*

WHAT IS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION (ED)?

ED, or erectile dysfunction, is when a man finds it hard to get or keep an erection that's firm enough for sex. It affects about one (1) out of two (2) men over the age of 50. In some, ED only happens from time to time. In others, it's a more severe problem.

WHAT CAUSES ED?

While ED is more common as men age, growing old is not the cause of the problem. ED can signal an underlying health and/or emotional problem. Finding and treating the cause(s) of your ED can improve your overall health and your sex life.

ED happens when blood doesn't flow well to the penis, or when the nerves in the penis are harmed. ED can be from an injury, surgery, heart disease, peripheral arterial disease or high blood pressure. It can be due to high blood sugar, alcohol and drugs or smoking. Some medicines may also cause ED. Emotional stress (depression, anxiety or relationship problems) can lead to or worsen ED.

HOW DO YOU LOWER YOUR RISK OF GETTING ED?

Taking active steps to prevent ED may help your sexual function and improve your general health. The best things you can do are:

- Exercise regularly
- Keep or get to a healthy weight

- Avoid smoking or vaping
- Limit drinking alcohol (two drinks or less per day)
- Avoid using illegal drugs
- Adjust your medicines if needed (never make changes without first talking to your doctor)
- Adopt better sleep habits (7-8 hours per night is ideal)
- Take care of other health problems like high blood sugar and heart, artery or kidney disease (work with your doctor to regain health)

If you do have ED, talk to your healthcare provider to learn why it's happening and how to find the best treatment.

HOW IS ED TREATED?

Your healthcare provider will want to learn about your physical and emotional health before choosing treatment. You may be asked to change your lifestyle habits or the medicines you use. For example, you may be asked to lose weight or exercise more. You may be asked to stop smoking, vaping, or using drugs or alcohol. You may be offered a different type or dose of a medicine you are already taking. Never make changes to medicines without first talking to your provider.

At the same time, your provider will want you to address any emotional problems. These could stem from relationships, work, stress, depression or anxiety from past problems with ED (performance anxiety). Your healthcare provider may refer you to a counselor if there is a more serious mental health concern.

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For many men, ED can be prevented or treated safely. Treatments range from sex therapy, to things like vacuum devices, oral or injectable drugs, hormone therapy and surgery. Most treatments work very well.

If you have ED, there is help. Talk with your healthcare provider about options to prevent or treat ED.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

- What is ED and what causes it?
- What can I do to prevent ED?
- Can you help me, or do I need to see a specialist? (ask for a referral if needed)
- What tests will help find the cause of my ED?
- What treatment(s) can help me? How do they work? What are the side effects?
- What happens if the first treatment doesn't help?
- If surgery is my best choice, can I talk first to a patient that you've helped?
- Would a sex therapist help me?

About the Urology Care Foundation

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts.

To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions or go to UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist to find a doctor near you.

Disclaimer:

This information 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 talk to your urologists or healthcare provider about your health concerns. Always consult a healthcare provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications.

For copies of printed materials about ED and other urologic conditions, visit UrologyHealth.org/Order or call 800-828-7866.