Health Basics

Erectile Dysfunction

What is erectile dysfunction?

This male sexual dysfunction prevents a man from getting or keeping an erection. Although erectile dysfunction is not a natural part of aging, the condition is more commonly found in older men.

What are the symptoms of erectile dysfunction?

- Problems getting an erection
- Problems keeping an erection
- Lowered sexual desire

What causes erectile dysfunction?

Causes of erectile dysfunction may be physical or psychological. Common physical causes include the following conditions:

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Tobacco use
- Certain prescription meds
- Alcoholism
- High cholesterol
- Obesity
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson’s disease

Common psychological factors that can cause erectile dysfunction include the following conditions:

- Mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety
- Stress

What are the risk factors for erectile dysfunction?

Some risk factors for erectile dysfunction include smoking, certain medical treatments such as prostate surgery or radiation treatment for cancer, obesity, certain medications, prolonged bicycling and injuries to the nerves or arteries that control erections.

What are the testing procedures for erectile dysfunction?

- Physical exam: Doctors carefully examine the penis and testicles and check nerve sensation.
- Blood test: Doctors check for signs of heart disease, diabetes, low testosterone levels and other health conditions.
- Urinalysis: Doctors look for signs of diabetes and other health problems.
- Ultrasound: Doctors check for blood flow problems in blood vessels that nourish the penis by taking video images of these structures.

How is erectile dysfunction treated?

There are several treatment options for erectile dysfunction. Doctors can prescribe oral medications, self-administered drug treatments, hormone replacement therapy or the use of devices, such as a penis pump, and penile implants. In addition, if blood vessel damage is indicated, doctors may suggest surgery.

Doctors may also suggest lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking, losing weight, increasing daily exercise, getting treatment for drugs or alcohol and working through emotional issues in your relationship, which can help to alleviate erectile dysfunction.

Last Reviewed: September 4, 2018

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/basics/health-basics/erectile-dysfunction