



UNDERSTANDING IMPOTENCE

What is IMPOTENCE?

Impotence or Erectile dysfunction (ED) as it is known in medical term is the persistent inability to get or maintain an erection firm enough for satisfactory sexual intercourse. The key word is persistent. All men have difficulties with erections from time to time. Only when it is persistent, does it need to be evaluated and treated.

How do erections occur?

Sexual arousal, causes the brain to release certain chemicals that cause the blood rush into the sponge like chambers of the penis. Thus penis which is limp becomes rigid. This is just like a balloon which is limp when there is no air blown into it, but once air is blown inside, it becomes taut & firm. After a man climaxes, or has an orgasm, the blood flows out again and the erection quickly subsides.

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What causes ED?

ED can occur as a result from physical factors or psychological factors or a combination of both.

Physical Causes

The various physical causes of ED can be grouped into three basic problems:

- 1) Inadequate blood flow to penis to maintain erection. The common causes for this are hardening of the arteries due to diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol & cigarette smoking.
- 2) The penis cannot store blood during an erection. A man with this problem, called venous leak, typically cannot maintain an erection because blood does not remain trapped in the penis.
- 3) Nerve messages from the brain or spinal cord do not reach the penis. Diabetes spinal cord injuries may cause these problems. Injuries or surgery to the pelvic area also can damage the nerves to the penis.

Psychological Causes

Sexual activity requires the mind and body to work together. Consequently, many emotional or relationship problems can cause or worsen ED. These include depression, marital or relationship conflicts stress at home or work & anxiety about sexual performance. The last one is probably the most important in a young man.

Medicinal Causes

Common medicines that cause ED include many medications to treat high blood pressure, medicines for BPH (prostate) & medication for a running nose.

Recreational drugs

Alcohol marijuana, cocaine and heroin, are well-known causes of ED. Smoking also narrows the arteries & may cause ED.

MYTHS ABOUT IMPOTENCE

Myth 1: Impotence is an inevitable part of aging.

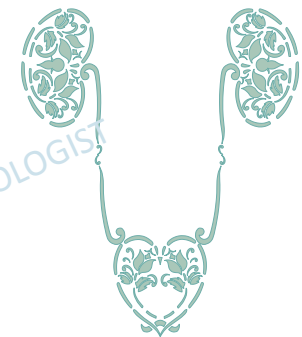
Fact: function does decrease with age but a lot of men do seem to enjoy sexual activity into their sixties and seventies. This may be due to reduced testosterone levels as a result of aging. It is also likely that many men have heart disease or diabetes mellitus, that increase the risk of impotence. Still, slowing down is not the same as stopping. It is important to remember ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION IS TREATABLE.

Myth 2: Impotence is nothing to worry about.

Fact: ED can have a negative impact on a man's self-esteem, quality of life and relationship with his partner. Also, 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 condition that causes . Hence it needs to be evaluated.

Myth 3: Impotence is all in your mind.

Fact: At one time, doctors thought that psychological problems, such as stress and anxiety, were the main causes of ED. While this may be true in many young men it is now believed a majority of the older men



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