



ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

Erectile dysfunction (dis-funk-shen) means having problems with erections – not being able to get or keep an erection that is firm enough to have sex. At any age, it's normal to have erection problems now and then. But erection problems are more common in older men who may have other long-time health problems like diabetes or heart disease.

What causes erectile dysfunction?

It can be caused by many things such as:

- Physical problems: injury to the nerves of the penis or loss of blood supply to the penis.
- Health problems: diabetes, heart disease, depression, anxiety.
- Certain medications: blood pressure drugs, antidepressants.
- Lifestyle: smoking, lack of exercise or being overweight.

In fact, erectile dysfunction may be a sign that you might have heart problems, diabetes or other health problems.

Can erectile dysfunction be treated?

Yes. There are many treatments that can help. Your doctor might start by discussing changes to your lifestyle (like quitting smoking, exercising, drinking in moderation) or stopping/changing any medications that may be causing the problem. If your erectile dysfunction is caused by depression or anxiety, you might try counselling or medication.

There are prescription medications taken by mouth that can help you get erections. Talk with your doctor about whether these medications are safe for you to take. This is especially important if you have heart disease. If you do, your doctor will ask you about your ability to do exercise.

Other treatments for erectile dysfunction include:

- Medications placed on or into the penis through injections, creams/gels or suppositories.
- Vacuum devices that gently pull blood into the penis.
- Surgery that places an implant into the penis which is semi-rigid or can be inflated.

It is important to discuss with your doctor all the treatment options including their benefits and side effects.

Sources: 1) Erection Problems (Erectile Dysfunction). HealthLink BC 2017. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/hw112768>; **2)** Erectile Dysfunction. Canadian Men's Health Foundation. <https://menshealthfoundation.ca/health-information/penis/erectile-dysfunction>

