

HORMONES AND ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The endocrine system is a network of glands and organs that produce, store, and secrete hormones, which are really important in maintaining a healthy sex drive. Hormones play a big role in men's health, affecting energy, weight, mood, sex, fertility, and much more. Low blood testosterone (male sex hormone) concentrations can result in a lower sex drive and even erectile dysfunction. This is a condition in which a man may have trouble getting or keeping an erection.

WHAT IS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

Erectile dysfunction (ED), or impotence, is the inability to consistently get or keep an erection (hard penis) long enough to have satisfactory sex.

While it's perfectly natural to notice a gradual decrease in **libido** (sex drive) as you age, the degree of decline varies. Men generally maintain some interest in sex well into their 60s, 70s, and beyond. If you're concerned about loss of sex drive, especially if it happens suddenly, you should consult your doctor. He or she can do a physical exam and request lab tests to determine the cause.

COMMON CAUSES

The most common causes of ED are underlying health problems that affect blood vessels and blood flow in the penis. These include hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis), diabetes, obesity, smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

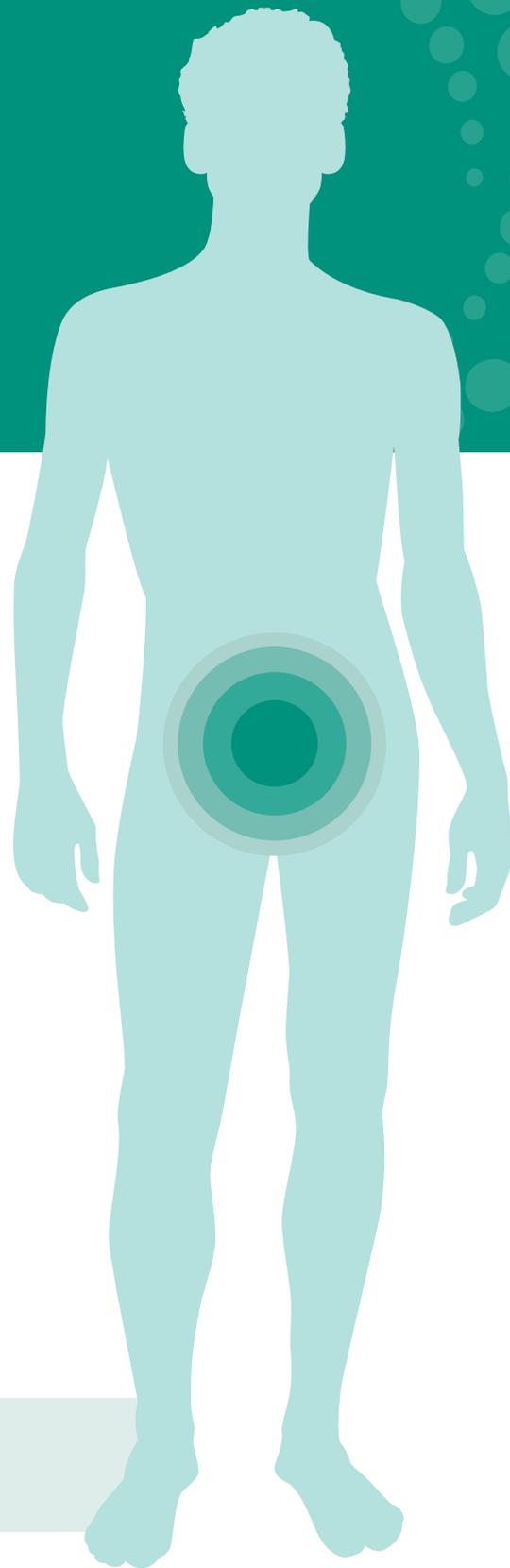
Other common causes of ED may include:

-  Depression or stress
-  Anxiety or fear of sexual failure
-  Decrease in blood testosterone due to an endocrine disorder
-  Medications (antidepressants, sleeping pills, and drugs to treat high blood pressure, pain, or cancer)
-  Alcohol and illegal drugs

Even if ED has a physical cause, emotional factors may make the condition worse.



Don't be embarrassed. It's worth it to have an open and honest discussion with your doctor about your loss of sex drive or erectile dysfunction. A healthy sex life is part of a healthy life in general.



Visit hormone.org for more information.

Additional Editing by Bradley D. Anawalt, MD,
University of Washington



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DID YOU KNOW?

While it is true that older men may not get “turned on” as quickly, they should still be able to get and keep an erection and enjoy sex.

- Researchers estimate that ED affects as many as 30 million men in the United States.
- About 12 percent are younger than age 60.
- About 30 percent are age 70 or older.

Source: National Institutes of Health

Complications of ED may include:

- Unfulfilled sex life
- Emotional problems, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem
- Loss of intimacy with partner, causing a strained relationship
- Inability to get partner pregnant

DIAGNOSIS

Your doctor will carefully evaluate your medical history, including a history of sexual function, medications, illnesses, emotional changes or injuries that could be causing your ED. He or she may also give you a physical exam, schedule lab work like a urinalysis and blood tests, or ask you mental health questions.



TREATMENT

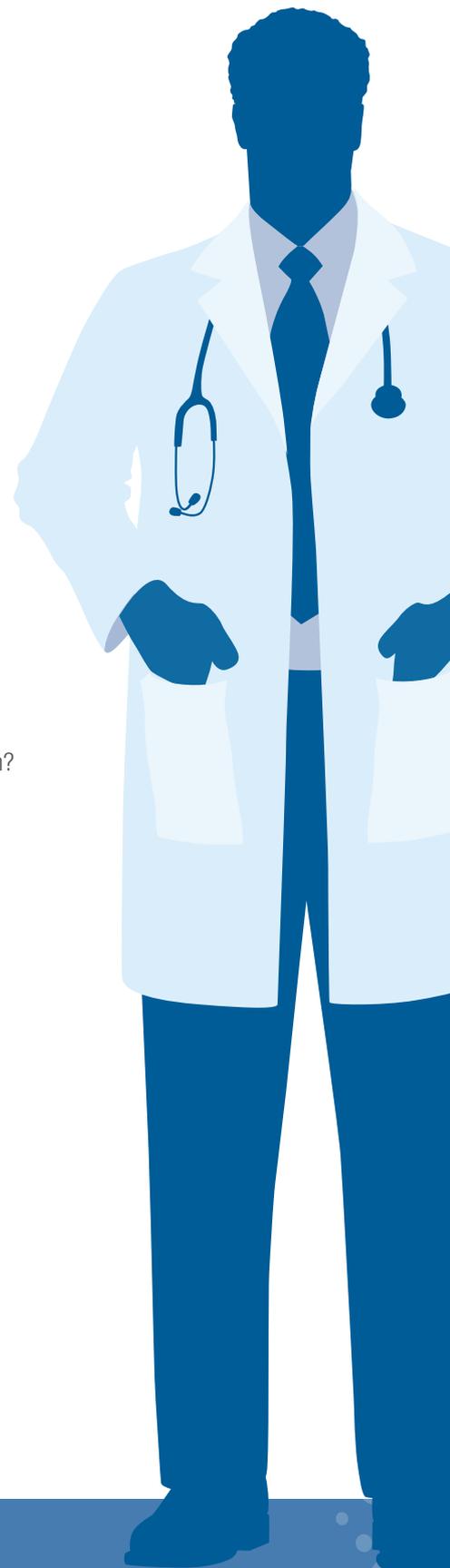
If you only have ED “every once in a while,” you may not need treatment. If your doctor diagnoses you with ED, then the options to treat it will depend on the cause and may include medicine, lifestyle changes, therapy, devices, and other options.

4 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- Could my ED be caused by another condition?
- Are any of the medications I’m taking making it worse?
- What are the pros and cons of your recommended treatment?
- Are there lifestyle changes I might make to improve my condition?

LIFESTYLE CHANGES THAT MIGHT HELP

- Quit Smoking
- Limit or stop drinking alcohol
- Increase physical activity
- Stop illegal drug use



Patients have questions. We have answers.

The Hormone Health Network is your trusted source for endocrine patient education. Our free, online resources are available at hormone.org.



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