

## How is erectile dysfunction treated?

Your doctor can offer you a number of treatments for ED. For many men, the answer is as simple as taking a pill. Other men have to try two or three options before they find a treatment that works for them. Don't give up if the first treatment doesn't work. Finding the right treatment can take time. You may want to talk with your sexual partner about which treatment fits you best as a couple.

A doctor can treat ED by

- treating the cause of your ED:
  - lifestyle changes
  - changing the medicines you take to treat other health problems
  - counseling
- prescribing medicines to treat your ED:
  - medicine by mouth
  - other forms of medicine
- prescribing a vacuum device
- performing surgery:
  - implanted devices
  - surgery to repair blood vessels

## Treating the Cause of Your Erectile Dysfunction

The first step is to treat any health problems that may be causing your ED. Untreated diabetes or high blood pressure may be part of the cause of your ED.

**Lifestyle changes.** For some men, the following lifestyle changes help:

- quitting smoking
- drinking less alcohol
- increasing physical activity
- stopping illegal drug use

**Changing medicines you take to treat other health problems.** Talk with your doctor about all the medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter medicines. The doctor may find that a medicine you are taking is causing your ED. Your doctor may be able to give you another medicine that works in a different way, or your doctor may tell you to try a lower dose of your medicine.

**Counseling.** Counseling can help couples deal with the emotional effects of ED. Some couples find that counseling adds to the medical treatment by making their relationship stronger.

## Prescribing Medicines to Treat Your Erectile Dysfunction

Depending on which medicine your doctor gives you, you may take it by mouth or by putting it directly into your penis.

**Medicine by mouth.** Your doctor may be able to prescribe a pill to treat ED. Common medicines include

- **sildenafil** (Viagra)
- **vardenafil** (Levitra, Staxyn)
- **tadalafil** (Cialis)
- **avanafil** (Stendra)

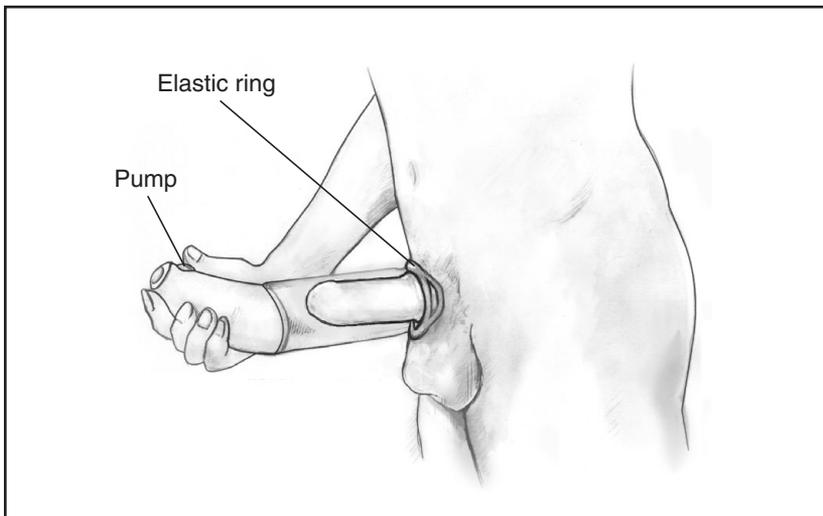
If your health is generally good, your doctor may prescribe one of these medicines. You should not take any of these pills to treat ED if you take any nitrates, a type of heart medicine. All ED pills work by increasing blood flow to the penis. They do not cause automatic erections. Talk with your doctor about when to take the pill. You may need to experiment to find out how soon the pill takes effect.

**Other forms of medicine.** Taking a pill doesn't work for all men. You may need to use medicine that goes directly into your penis. You may use an injection into the shaft of your penis, or you may use medicine placed in your **urethra**, at the

tip of your penis. The urethra is the tube that carries urine and semen outside of the body. Your doctor will teach you how to use the medicines. They most often cause an erection within minutes. These medicines can be successful, even if other treatments fail.

### **Prescribing a Vacuum Device**

Another way to create an erection is to use a device with a specially designed vacuum tube. You put your penis into the tube, which is connected to a pump. As air is pumped out of the tube, blood flows into your penis and makes it larger and firmer. You then move a specially designed elastic ring from the end of the tube to the base



Vacuum device

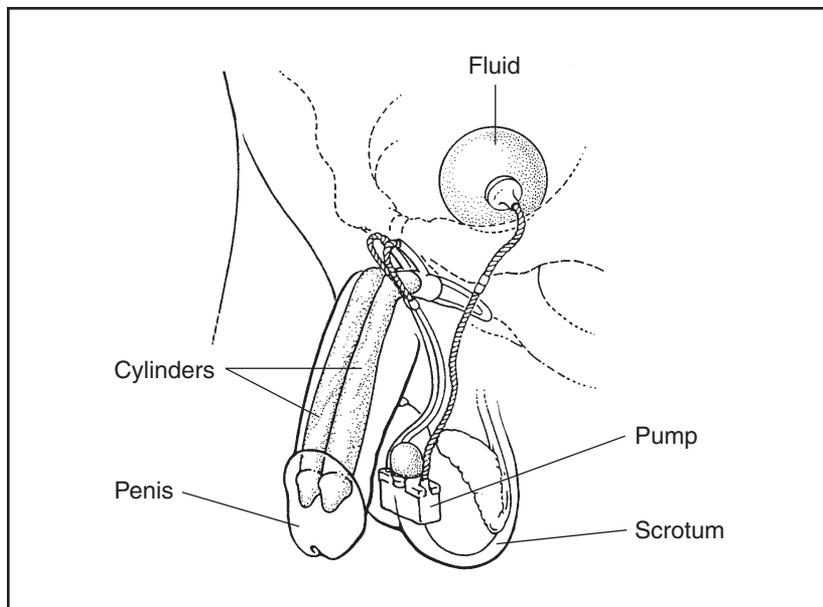
of your penis to keep the blood from flowing back into your body. You may find that using a vacuum device requires some practice.

## Performing Surgery

If the other options fail, you may need surgery to treat ED.

**Implanted devices.** A urologist can place a device that fills with fluid or a device with bendable rods inside the penis to create an erection.

One kind of implant uses two cylinders that fill with fluid like a balloon. Tubing connects the cylinders to a small ball that holds the fluid. You



Implanted device

fill the cylinders by squeezing a small pump that the urologist places under the skin of the scrotum, in front of your testes. The pump causes fluid to flow into the two cylinders in your penis, making it hard. The fluid can make the penis slightly longer and wider. An implant that uses fluids instead of bendable rods leaves the penis in a more natural state when not in use.

Implants that bend most often have two rods that the urologist places side by side in your penis during surgery. You use your hands to adjust the position of the rods to make your penis straight. Your penis does not get larger. After sex, you bend the rods down.

Implanted devices do not affect the way sex feels or the ability to have an orgasm.

Once you have an implanted device, you must use the device to have an erection every time. Talk with your doctor about the pros and cons of having an implanted device.

**Surgery to repair blood vessels.** Doctors treat some cases of ED with surgery to repair the blood vessels that carry blood to the penis. This type of surgery is more likely to work in men younger than 30.