

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Provider About Erectile Dysfunction (ED)

Erectile dysfunction (ED) affects most men at one time or another during the course of their lives. If ED is chronic, however, then it's important to talk to a health care professional about it. The first priority is to make sure your ED is not caused by a serious medical condition, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, kidney disease, or diabetes.

But it's also important to take care of the emotional and psychological pain that erectile dysfunction can cause. ED can cause low self-esteem in men, as well as in their sexual partners, and can have a negative impact on intimate relationships. Common treatments for impotence include oral medications, sex therapy, self-injections, vacuum devices, surgery, or simple lifestyle changes such as a change in diet, exercise, or sleep habits. The first step is to talk to a health care provider about your ED.

Many men find it awkward to talk about their erectile dysfunction for the first time. It can therefore be helpful to write down a few questions to ask your health care provider. We've provided a few common questions about ED to give you a head start.

How can I know whether my erectile dysfunction has a psychological cause or is the result of an underlying medical condition?

Is erectile dysfunction just an inevitable part of getting older, or should it be treated at any age?

Do you think my erectile dysfunction is related to cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, diabetes, or another serious medical condition?

Do I need to see a different type of health care provider, such as a urologist, an endocrinologist, a psychiatrist, or a sex therapist? Why or why not?

How much of a role do things like diet, alcohol consumption, smoking, exercise, and amount of sleep play in either causing or treating erectile dysfunction?

If you find that my ED is caused by an underlying medical condition, will my ED be any more or less treatable?

What types of ED treatment are available?

What type of treatment do you recommend? What are the pros and cons of the possible treatments?

If this treatment is not successful, what would be the next step?

I've heard a lot about oral medications such as sildenafil, tadalafil, or vardenafil. Would one of these be appropriate for me?

I heard on a TV ad for an ED medication that I should ask my doctor whether I'm healthy enough for sexual activity. Can you explain what they mean by that?