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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED PATIENT QUESTIONS: ABOUT ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION**

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### **WHAT IS ED?**

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is defined as the persistent inability to achieve or maintain a penile erection sufficient for satisfactory sexual performance.<sup>1</sup>

ED can limit your intimacy, affect your self-esteem, and impact your most important relationships. Beyond the physical manifestations, ED causes emotional damage and there is a strong link found between ED and depression<sup>2</sup>

### **HOW COMMON IS ED?**

ED is a surprisingly common condition. Over 2 million Australian men over the age of 40 have some degree of ED.<sup>3</sup>

### **WHAT CAUSES ED?**

While there are real physical and psychological reasons for ED, there's no single cause. The most common causes of ED are: vascular (40%), diabetes (30%), medication (20%), pelvic surgery and trauma (3%), neurological (3%), endocrine (3%), and unknown (1%).<sup>4</sup>

### **HOW IS ED DIAGNOSED?**

You may have to start the conversation with your doctor to get an answer to the question, "Do I have ED?". A personal history and physical exam set the groundwork for most conditions. Lab tests and other tests may identify a source such as diabetes, coronary artery disease or other conditions that affect the nerves and blood flow to the penis.

### **IF I HAVE ED SYMPTOMS, COULD I HAVE HEART DISEASE?**

Hardening of the arteries caused by plaque buildup – atherosclerosis – limits blood flow to various parts of the body. The arteries supplying blood to the penis are much smaller than the ones supplying blood to the heart. As a result, heart disease may first show itself as difficulty achieving an erection.<sup>5</sup>

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## WHY DOES DIABETES CAUSE ED SYMPTOMS?

Diabetes damages the blood vessels and nerves that supply the penis with blood to form an erection. The constant change in blood sugar levels can also cause nerve damage, which can lead to loss of sensation in the feet and hands, and can affect having sex.<sup>6</sup>

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIDE EFFECTS FROM PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT?

The two side effects of a radical prostatectomy may be the loss of erections and bladder leakage. These side effects can occur, but there are successful treatment options available. Also, after total removal of the prostate, there is no ejaculation, although there is the sensation of climax and orgasm.<sup>7</sup>

## WHEN CAN A MAN RESUME SEXUAL ACTIVITY AFTER PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT?

If the cancer is detected early and patients are treated by an experienced surgeon using nerve-sparing techniques, then sexual activity may return to normal after surgery. This can take three to six months with continued improvement for two or three years.<sup>8</sup>

If sexual activity does not return on its own, there are many different ways to support an active sex life (medications, pumps, injections and penile implants).

## HOW IS ED TREATED?

ED treatment is available to all men with ED. Oral medications are a common first step, but they don't work for everyone. If men don't respond to oral medications, they may try other options such as pump devices, injections and penile implants.

**FIND A SPECIALIST IN YOUR AREA**  
**[www.HARDFacts.co.nz](http://www.HARDFacts.co.nz)**

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CAUTION: Indications, contraindications, warnings and instructions for use can be found in the product labelling supplied with each device.

Individual symptoms, situations, circumstances and results may vary. This information is not intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment or as a substitute for professional medical advice. Please consult your doctor or qualified healthcare provider regarding your condition and appropriate medical treatment.

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