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Erectile Dysfunction It's Not in Your Head

by Minerva Santos, MD



Almost every man experiences an erectile problem at one time or another in his life. An estimated fifty percent of men over the age of forty are affected to some degree by Erectile Dysfunction (ED). ED is the inability to achieve or maintain an erection to complete sexual activity, and it can have devastating effects on relationships. Many couples feel uncomfortable talking about ED, which can become worse as performance anxiety increases.

Diabetes, smoking and high cholesterol are the three most significant causes of ED. Fatigue, stress or too much alcohol may also contribute to ED, as will anti-inflammatory drugs, "water pills," some blood pressure medications, antihistamines, antidepressants, anti-anxiety pills and even some lipid lowering medications.

ED may also be nature's way of telling a man that something more serious is going on. It's a good predictor of coronary artery disease, for example, because restricted blood flow in the penis can indicate a narrowing of the arteries in the heart. Studies found that, among men developing ED, 2% had a significant heart event within one year, and 11% experienced such an event within five years. Those who are struggling with ED should therefore discuss it with their physician and undergo a complete cardiac evaluation.

While there are medications on the market to treat ED, supplements like Zinc, flaxseed meal, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, and L-Arginine have also been used to relieve the problem. Additionally, the herbs Asian ginseng and Ginkgo biloba can reduce ED in some men, especially those on antidepressants. Acupuncture, yoga and relaxation techniques have also been successful for some men experiencing this problem.

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