

Changing Erections

Erectile Dysfunction and Pleasure



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Introduction

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is a clinical term usually defined as the inability to develop and maintain an erection for satisfactory sexual activity. At Come As You Are we don't think the idea of "normal" is helpful to experiencing sexual pleasure, and we know that even clinicians don't agree on how often or for how long you might have difficulties with erections before you would be diagnosed with erectile dysfunction.

Here's what we know: everyone who gets erections will experience changes over time with how the erections might feel. They could get harder or softer, they may happen when you don't want them to, and might not happen when you do. Instead of measuring your erections against an arbitrary norm, think about what you want, and how you can go about getting it.

This pamphlet offers a non-medical perspective on erections and sexual pleasure.

What Causes Erectile Dysfunction?

But erections are actually incredibly sensitive measures of our overall health. Changes in erections can be caused by one or a combination of many factors, including:

Physical Causes

These can include changes in hormones and cardiovascular health or diseases such as diabetes. Drugs, both recreational and pharmaceutical, can cause ED as a side effect. If you are experiencing changes in erections, it's probably a good time to check in with your health professional to ensure that your changing erections are not an early indication of a health problem.

Psychological Causes

Stress, anxiety, distraction, fear, and any number of other thoughts and feelings can, and do, get in the way of having the kinds of erections you may want.

Social Causes

Our society's rigid gender roles often result in people who identify as men carrying a lot of conflict, guilt, shame, and anger about the way they are portrayed and treated in society. These messages can, and commonly do, impact physical sexual response, particularly when it comes to erections - the most visible sign of male sexuality.

Relationship/Interpersonal

Difficulties with erections may have little or nothing to do with physical issues and may be the result of relationship and interpersonal conflict, including abuse.

What to do when you are expecting...(erections)!

Talking with your partner about sexual expectations is important. Does sex only "happen" when there's an erection? If so, it's worth questioning whether that's causing you undue stress and whether that always has to be the case. There are so many ways to experience connection, intimacy, and hot sex without an erection. Feeling like you don't need an erection to give and receive pleasure can open up worlds of possibility!

Expanding Your Options

Beyond drug treatments, there are many ways of prevent-

ing and managing ED. These include learning to manage your stress or medical condition, shifting your diet, opening up your communication with your partner(s) and much more. In addition to seeing a medical professional, you may find talking to a counselor or sex therapist a helpful way to address your changing erections.

Add something new: Try a toy!

Aneros - this line of prostate massagers can help increase blood flow, improve prostate health, and for many, offers a pleasurable experience with or without touching the penis.

Penis Rings - by restricting blood flow, rings can result in a harder, longer lasting erection for some men. Many people also find the sensation they create pleasurable.

Vibrators can be fun for all! Vibrators can help you explore new sensations while increasing blood flow.

Further Resources

Many ED resources are actually pharmaceutical industry funded marketing sites. Below are a few that aren't.

Scarleteen: www.scarleteen.com

The Sexual Health Network: www.sexualhealth.com

The Board of Examiners in Sex Therapy & Counselling in Ontario: www.bestco.info

Dick: A User's Guide (Book) - Dr. Michele C. Moore & Dr. Caroline Costa

Lasting Longer (Book) - Dr. Sy Silverberg

Multi-orgasmic Man (Book) - Mantak Chia & Douglas Abrams