

## Understanding Erectile Dysfunction

This handout offers information to help you understand the treatment options for erectile dysfunction (ED). ED is when you have difficulty having or keeping a firm erection. This happens when there is less blood flow to your penis.

ED can be caused by more than one reason. How you feel about the changes in your erections is important no matter what the cause is. A lot of men feel less of a man if they cannot get an erection like they used to.

### Causes of erectile dysfunction

- Age  
It is important to know that about 40% of men over age 40 and 50% over age 50 are likely to experience some ED even without a cancer diagnosis.
- Stress
- Anxiety or depression
- Worries about sexual performance
- Surgery and/or radiation to your pelvic area can bruise or damage the nerves around your prostate. If these nerves were cut during surgery, your erectile function may not improve. If the nerves were not cut, it can take 2 to 4 years for your erectile function to improve.

### What you can do to manage erectile dysfunction

ED does not mean your sex life has to stop. It may be different than it was before your cancer treatment.

It is possible to have an orgasm with a soft penis. Masturbation or partner stimulation helps bring blood flow and oxygen to your penis. This will help with your ED because it keeps the tissue of your penis healthy while the nerves heal.

There are many ways you can be intimate with your partner. You and your partner may want to try oral sex, masturbation on your own or with a partner. You may also want to try sex toys like a dildo or vibrator.

### What you can do if you have a partner

- Focus on pleasure.
- Massage your partner and touch them in many different ways.
- Continue to talk, touch, kiss and hug.
- Share your feelings about sex and sexuality with your partner.
- Let your partner know what you are thinking and feeling. Let your partner know you still value them and your relationship. Listen to your partner's feelings and needs.
- If you and your partner need help starting this conversation, ask to talk to a social worker at the cancer centre. They can give you counselling and instructions on sensate focus exercises.

### What you can do if you don't have a partner

- Know that you have a right to have pleasure.
- You may worry about telling a new partner about your ED. If you need help communicating with your partner, talk to your healthcare team.


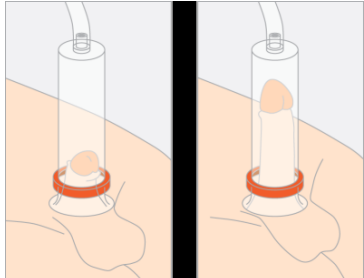
### **Treatment options**

There are many treatment options available for ED. Finding a treatment option that works for you may take time. You may have to try more than one treatment option to find what works for you. Talk to your urologist, oncologist, family doctor or nurse practitioner to find the option that is best for you.

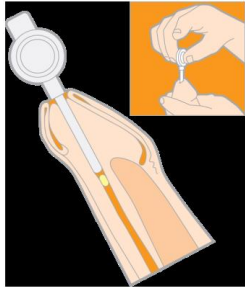
This handout offers information on 8 different treatment options:

1. Penile or intracavernosal injection
2. Vacuum Erection Device (VED)
3. Oral medications
4. Intraurethral pellets or Medicated Urethral System of Erection (MUSE)
5. Constriction ring
6. Elator
7. Strap-on dildo
8. Surgical penile implant

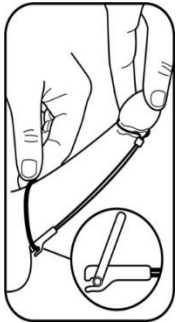

## Treatment options to help you with erectile dysfunction

Name	What is it?	How does it work?	How do I get it?	What are the side effects/	How effective is it?
<p>Penile or intracavernosal injection</p> 	<p>An injection of a medication using a small needle into the side of your penis just before intercourse.</p>	<p>The medication relaxes the blood vessels causing your penis to fill with blood and become erect. Sexual excitement is not needed for the medication to work. Erection usually starts within 5 to 20 minutes. You need to wait 10 to 30 minutes before you have sex. Erection should last about an hour and may continue after you ejaculate.</p>	<p>You need a prescription from your doctor or nurse practitioner.</p>	<p>Prolonged erection; pain and scarring in the injection area.</p> <p>In rare cases your erection can last longer than 4 to 6 hours. If this happens, go to the emergency department at the hospital closest to you.</p>	<p>Effective for about 90% of men.</p>
<p>Vacuum Erection Device (VED)</p> 	<p>A plastic cylinder that uses suction to draw blood into your penis causing an erection.</p>	<p>Use the cylinder to draw blood into your penis to cause an erection. Place a rubber ring on the base of your erect penis. The ring will stop the blood from leaving your penis. You can only wear the ring for a maximum of 30 minutes at a time. There is no limit on how often you use the VED. Using a VED regularly helps maintain the length and duration of your erection. This</p>	<p>You don't need a prescription to buy a VED.</p>	<p>Follow the instructions that come with the VED to avoid injury to your penis</p>	<p>Effective for 50-80% of men.</p>

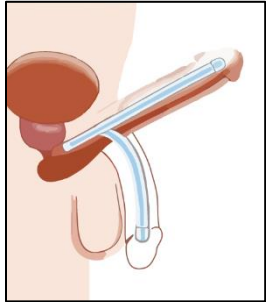
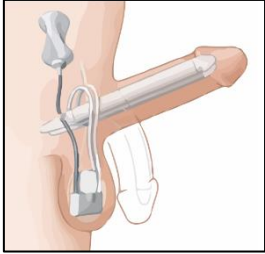
## Treatment options to help you with erectile dysfunction

Name	What is it?	How does it work?	How do I get it?	What are the side effects/	How effective is it?
		help keep the tissue of your penis healthy.			
Oral medications (pills or tablets)	This medication works to open up the blood vessels in your penis allowing blood to flow in and cause an erection.	Sexual desire, interest or thoughts and stimulation to your penis are needed for these medications to work well. You may need to try more than one medication to find what works best.	You need a prescription from a doctor or nurse practitioner.	Headaches and/or dizziness; redness of your face; indigestion; stuffy nose.  Do not take these medications if you are taking nitrates for your heart. Ask your doctor about this.	Effective for about 50% of men.
Intraurethral Pellets or Medicated Urethral System of Erection (MUSE)  	This medication comes in a pellet smaller than a grain of rice. It relaxes the blood vessels causing your penis to fill with blood and cause an erection.	Use the applicator to insert medication into your penis. Gently massage or stimulate your penis to dissolve the pellet.	You need a prescription from a doctor or nurse practitioner.	Dizziness Itchiness and/or burning of your penis.	Effective in 30-40% of men.

## Treatment options to help you with erectile dysfunction

Name	What is it?	How does it work?	How do I get it?	What are the side effects/	How effective is it?
Constriction ring	An adjustable or elastic band placed at the base of your penis before you are sexually excited.	The ring keeps the blood in your penis to help you keep an erection. It is usually used in combination with a VED. Remove the ring after 30 minutes.	You can purchase these from a pharmacy or a sex shop online or in person at a store.	There are no side effects.	Depends on the reason you have erectile dysfunction.
Elator 	An external support device or splint for your penis. It allows you to have intercourse with a partial erection or without any erection at all.	Has two silicone rings. One is placed at the base of your penis and the other is placed behind the head of your penis. The rings are connected with two small, smooth, straight shafts which support your penis in an erect position.	Order online at <a href="http://www.theelator.com">www.theelator.com</a> The size must be custom fit for you.	There are no side effects.	Effective for most men if fitted properly.
Strap-on dildo 	An object shaped like a penis. It is either solid or hollow and used with or without a harness.	<u>With a Harness</u> Put the harness on and attach the dildo. A hollow dildo allows you to put your penis inside the dildo to penetrate a partner.  <u>Without harness</u> You hold the dildo and use it in ways you and/or your partner find enjoyable or pleasurable.	You can purchase from a sex shop online or at a store.	There are no side effects.	Effective for most men.

## Treatment options to help you with erectile dysfunction

Name	What is it?	How does it work?	How do I get it?	What are the side effects/	How effective is it?
<p>Surgical penile implant</p>  <p>Non-inflatable implant</p>  <p>Inflatable implant</p>	<p>A device surgically implanted in your penis. There are two types: non-inflatable implant or an inflatable implant.</p>	<p>It is important for you and your partner to use a lubricant.</p> <p><u>Non-Inflatable Implant</u> (Semi Rigid Rods) Keeps your penis hard at all times. Your penis can stay bent down when an erection is not needed.</p> <p><u>Inflatable Implant</u> (Hollow Rods and Scrotum Pump): When the pump is squeezed, it fills the rods with saline fluid. The rods then lift causing your penis to become erect. Use the release valve to deflate your erection at any time.</p>	<p>Talk to your surgeon.</p>	<p>Could stop working. There are risks to any surgery.</p>	<p>Effective in about 80% of men.</p>

Please talk to a member of your healthcare team if you have questions or do not understand any information in this handout.

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*The information in this handout was adapted with permission from a handout created by Trillium Health Partners.*