



# THOSE ISSUES ARISING BELOW HIS BELT

By MANU MOUDGIL

Almost every disease can interfere with the male capacity to attain an erection and new research shows that men with erectile dysfunction have an 80 per cent higher risk of developing heart disease than those without this problem

**M**EN (OR SO it is widely believed) want sex all the time, much more than women certainly. This isn't really surprising, considering that the level of the sex hormone testosterone, which is a predominantly male hormone, is twenty times higher in a man than a woman. For a man then, sex is a physical act that eases the testosterone pressure being experienced constantly. Despite the biological reality that sex is a bigger issue for men than women, men still don't know enough about their bodies and sexuality. Here we update you on some of the commonest male sexual issues and their solutions.

## THE BIG PROBLEM

EXPERTS SAY erectile dysfunctions (defined as the inability to attain or maintain an erection suitable for intercourse) make up the biggest chunk of male sexual issues. According to estimates, sexologists treat about 150 cases of erectile dysfunction every month. While old men are expected to experience an age-related dip in testosterone levels, young guys are also joining this league for various reasons.

Sexologists like to tell their patients to "use it or lose it". Contrary to popular belief, an excess of sex or masturbation may help prevent erectile dysfunction from developing. Researchers at the University of Tampere, Finland, observed that men reporting intercourse less than once per week had twice the incidence of erectile dysfunction compared with those who had intercourse once or more times per week.

"Erection is a mind and body game. Your brain desires something and an arousal takes place. This increases the blood flow to the penis, resulting in an erection. Failure to get an erection may occur either due to psychological reasons such as stress and performance anxiety or a physical disease that hampers the blood flow," says Dr V K Wadia, consultant sexual medicine, Bhagat Hospital.

Sadly, almost every single disease — from heart disease to diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, spinal injury, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis — can prevent a man from attaining an erection. These diseases may lead to the development of plaque in penile arteries or affect the nerves managing erection.

## TAKE DRUGS CAREFULLY TO AVOID A PROLONGED ERECTION

VIAGRA is hailed as a wonder drug, and can help men to attain an erection by causing muscular contraction, which leads to an increase in the blood rush to the core of the penis. Those taking this or any other medication to help them gain and sustain an erection must adhere to the doctor's prescription. Otherwise they may end up with a side effect such as priapism, a painful erection which lasts for more than four hours caused by blood trapping in the penis. "This generally hap-



pens due to overdose of injectable or oral drugs used for erectile dysfunction. Priapism can lead to permanent impotency and change the shape of the penis if it isn't treated promptly. Treatment generally involves drainage of blood by using a syringe," says Dr Anshuman Agarwal, senior urologist, RG Stone Urology and Laparoscopy Hospital. Priapism can also be caused by diseases such as blood cancer, certain tumours, and sickle cell anaemia.

## LINKED TO HEART DISEASE

NEW RESEARCH shows that erectile dysfunction can be a precursor to heart disease. Men with erectile dysfunction have an 80 per cent higher risk of developing heart disease than men without dysfunction, says the study by Mayo Clinic. It is believed that a build up of plaque that can block arteries around the heart may plug the smaller penile arteries first, causing this dysfunction.

Certain medications, including some anti-depressants, have also been linked to this problem. Too much booze, smoking and substance abuse are proven to influence your performance between the sheets. It appears that an activity as innocuous as bicycling can also lead to erectile problems. This happens because the pressure from a cycle seat compresses nerves and blood flow to the penis over an extended period.

The erectile capacity can be revived by treating the underlying cause. If you are unsure about whether you have a real physical problem, just check for a morning erection. "Healthy males get erections during their sleep three to four times a week. Even if this happens at least

once in a fortnight, it means that you can't blame a disease for your non-performance. Your hormone levels are normal, but you may be stressed or may lack the desire to make love with your partner," explains Dr Wadia. In this situation, various relaxation techniques and medications have been found useful for the relief of stress. Therapy to improve communication with your partner is also recommended for those who feel this is a problem. Penis pumps and implants are available but these are intended for use for those with serious issues like an injury which can't be corrected through medicines. These implants interfere with a man's fertility, making it impossible to procreate.

## PREMATURE OR DELAYED

IF YOU regularly ejaculate before intercourse actually begins or shortly afterwards, you are suffering from a condition called premature ejaculation. Although many men feel embarrassed to talk about this, the reality is that premature ejaculation is a common and treatable condition. "This is mainly caused by psychological problems. Early sexual experiences may establish a pattern

that can be difficult to change later in life. If you have had hurried sexual encounters at the beginning, you reach the ejaculation threshold faster. Anxiety can also lead to premature ejaculation," says Dr Wadia. New research shows that your genes may be responsible for early ejaculation. A study done in Netherlands found that a gene which controls the physiological mechanism of the body is less active among men who ejaculate prematurely.

Several techniques are useful in this condition. Penile sprays and condom use can reduce the response of your body to stimulation. You can try out the Masters-Johnson method, but this needs the support of your partner. Kegel exercises also help to build up the pelvis, which acts as a support against premature ejaculation.

Another lesser known problem causing an anti-climax is delayed ejaculation. This also affects your sex life since your partner reaches the peak before you and may not want to continue. Certain drugs, nerve damage due to spinal injury and stroke are some of the causes. Treatment generally involves sex therapy.

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## PEACHES CAN HELP PREVENT TUMOUR GROWTH

Reddish yellow peaches have more health benefits than you can possibly imagine. They are great for skin health and also contain plenty of antioxidants. Researchers at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station have found that peaches can actually inhibit the growth of tumours in varying degrees. It has been seen that

the consumption of peaches helps in the removal of worms from the intestinal tract and eating them on a regular basis can keep your bowel movements regular and even prevent constipation. This fruit also has a powerful diuretic effect and is thus recommended to people suffering from rheumatism and gout.

## True or False?

SHAVING MAKES HAIR GROW BACK FASTER

False: Shaving has no effect on the speed of regrowth, which comes from the living hair follicles below the skin's surface. The new growth may appear darker since it hasn't been exposed to the sun or chemicals. It may also seem coarser since the ends have not been tapered by wear and tear.

