

Living HEALTHY



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ED: More Common Than You Think

HEALTH EXPERTS ESTIMATE THAT AS many as 30 million American men have erectile dysfunction (ED). They regularly have trouble getting or keeping an erection. ED affects every man differently, but for many, it can be frustrating and upsetting.

Many factors can cause ED. These include health problems such as diabetes and kidney disease. Common medicines, including those for high blood pressure and allergies, may also trigger ED. Other possible culprits are stress, depression, surgery, being overweight, and low testosterone.

Fortunately, ED can be treated. But in order to do that, the first step is to see your doctor.

GET DIAGNOSED

There are a few ways your doctor can determine what may be causing your ED. He or she will likely start with the following:

- **Patient medical or sexual history.** This may reveal conditions or diseases that lead to impotence and help distinguish among problems with erection, ejaculation, orgasm, or sexual desire.
- **Physical examination.** This may reveal evidence of systemic problems such as the following:
 - A problem in the nervous system may be involved if the penis does not respond as expected to certain touching.
 - Secondary sex characteristics, such as hair pattern, can point to hormonal problems, which may involve the endocrine system.



- Circulatory problems, which may suggest problems with blood flow.
- Unusual characteristics of the penis itself could suggest the basis of the impotence.
- **Lab tests.** These can include blood counts, urinalysis, lipid profile, and measurements of creatinine and liver enzymes. When low sexual desire is a symptom, measurement of testosterone in the blood can yield information about problems with the endocrine system.
- **Psychosocial examination.** This is done to help reveal psychological factors that may be affecting performance. The sexual partner may also be interviewed to determine expectations and perceptions encountered during sexual intercourse.

TREATMENT TALK

ED can put a strain on men and their relationship with their partners. The good

news is that ED is treatable at any age. Treatment will be based on several factors, including age, overall health, medical history, and a man's needs and wishes. There are many treatment options, including pills, injections, pumps, and surgery to improve and treat ED. If you have ED, talk to your doctor about the therapies that are available and appropriate for you. ■

the doctor

V. Gary Price, M.D.
Urology

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Men, Don't Suffer in Silence: Treatment Improves Urologic Condition



COMMERCIALS FOR LITTLE BLUE PILLS began appearing within the last few years. But men have struggled with sexual difficulties for centuries.

Back in 1743, a French physician described a condition in which a hard, often painful lump formed within a man's penis. Today, men with this problem—called Peyronie's disease—have several treatment options to choose from.

SPOT THE SIGNS

The hard plaques of Peyronie's disease usually form on the upper side of the penis, though they can also affect the side or bottom. As a result, the penis may become curved, shortened, indented, or painful when erect. These symptoms may develop slowly or appear overnight.

You can't catch Peyronie's disease from someone else, and the condition doesn't lead to cancer. However, it can cause pain, discomfort, and difficulty having sex. An

estimated 9 percent of men develop it, although many men never seek treatment.

Doctors don't know why some men develop Peyronie's disease and others don't. Some suspect the condition results from poor healing following minor trauma to the penis. Since Peyronie's disease tends to run in families, genetic factors may also come into play.

TREATMENT IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE

Men often feel reluctant to tell their doctors about sexual problems. But in many cases, treatment can provide relief. A patient should never accept being told "there is nothing that can be done" without consulting with an expert in Peyronie's disease.

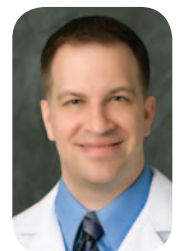
Doctors usually diagnose Peyronie's disease by interviewing the patient and examining the penis. Sometimes an ultrasound can provide helpful information. Although some cases spontaneously resolve without treatment, it is a very small percentage. For this reason, it is

recommended to consult with an expert as soon as symptoms appear. If diagnosed early, there are some treatments that can help prevent the condition from worsening. In certain cases, injections can help.

Doctors continue to study other nonsurgical options, including traction devices that gradually lengthen and stretch the penis over time. In cases that do not respond to medical therapy, surgeons can straighten the penis with an outpatient surgical procedure or place an implant to restore a man's sexual performance. ■

the doctor

Jason Greenfield, M.D.
Urology



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Treating Male Infertility

INFERTILITY IS A DISEASE OF THE reproductive system that impairs the body's ability to perform the basic function of reproduction. Although conceiving a child may seem to be simple and natural, the actual physiological process is quite complicated and depends on the proper function of many factors.

This condition affects about 12 percent of couples of childbearing age—and it's not just a woman's issue. In fact, a male factor is the sole cause in 20 percent of cases and is a contributing cause in 30 percent of cases, meaning that a male factor is present in about 50 percent of infertile couples. Some male factors include:

- **Low or absent sperm production.** Without proper numbers of healthy sperm, the chance of fertilization is decreased.
- **Abnormal sperm function.** Sperm must have proper mobility and the ability to penetrate the egg.
- **Varicocele.** This is a condition in which varicose veins develop around the testes. It is a very common cause of male factor infertility and is usually treatable and reversible with surgery.
- **Lifestyle.** Use of recreational drugs (i.e., marijuana, cocaine), heavy alcohol use, cigarette smoking, certain medications, and excessive heat to the genital area (as in hot tubs) can affect sperm quality and function.
- **Hormonal disorders.** Improper male hormone or endocrine function can affect sperm production and fertilization ability.
- **Chromosomal defects.** Certain chromosomal abnormalities are associated with male infertility.
- **Birth defects.** Abnormalities in a man's reproductive system can occur during fetal development.
- **Immunological problems.** A man may have antisperm antibodies (immune or protective proteins) which attack and destroy sperm.

HOW IS MALE INFERTILITY DIAGNOSED?

An evaluation by a male infertility expert begins with a focused history and physical, so he or she can look for factors that may affect fertility. Testing typically includes a hormone profile and two semen analyses with advanced testing. Additional blood work and imaging, including a scrotal ultrasound, may also be ordered.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR INFERTILITY?

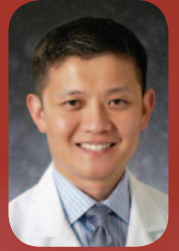
Specific treatment for infertility will be determined by your doctor based on:

- Your age, overall health, and medical history
- Extent of the disorder
- Cause of the disorder
- Your tolerance for specific medications, procedures, or therapies
- Expectations for the course of the disorder
- Your opinion or preference

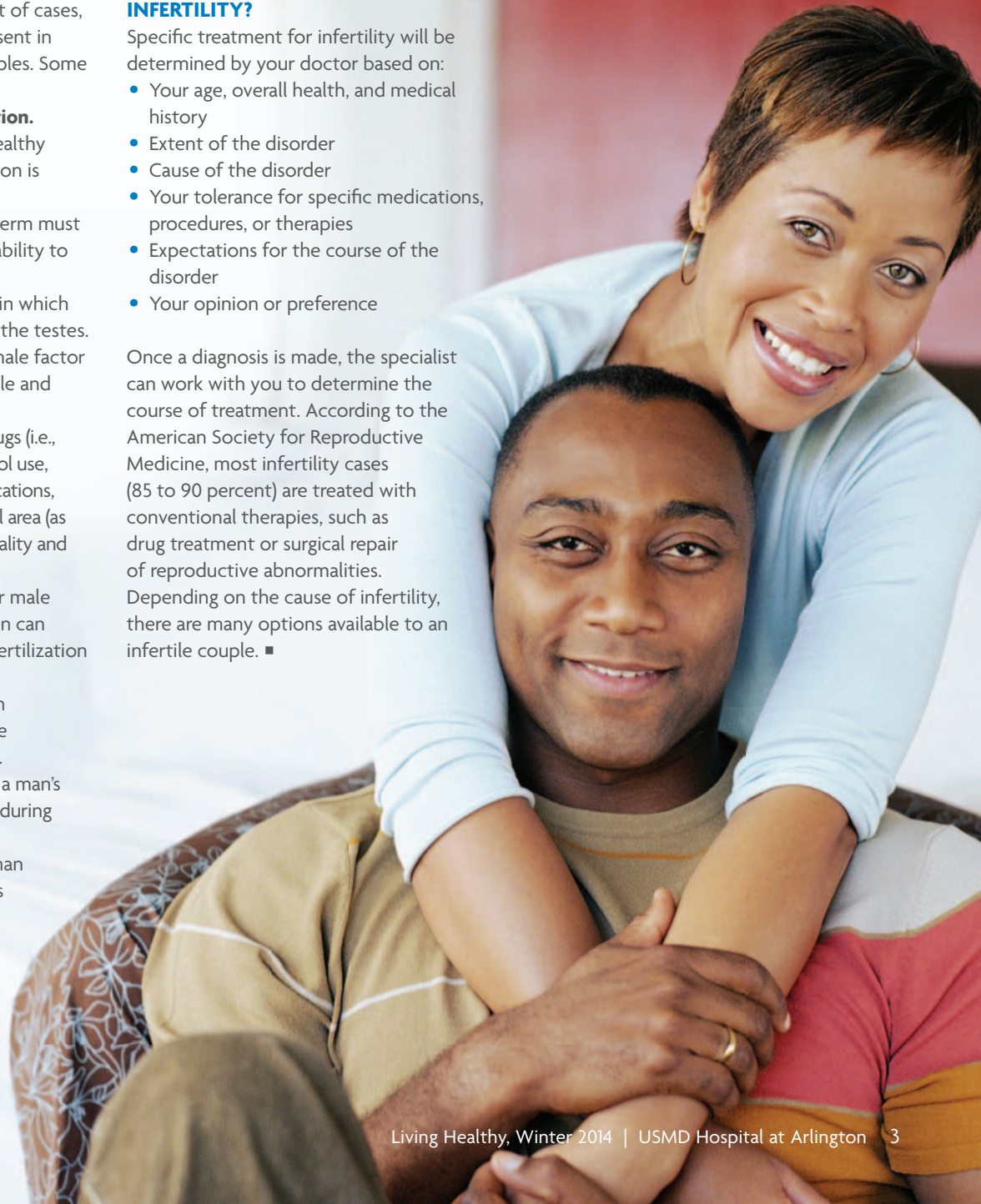
Once a diagnosis is made, the specialist can work with you to determine the course of treatment. According to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, most infertility cases (85 to 90 percent) are treated with conventional therapies, such as drug treatment or surgical repair of reproductive abnormalities. Depending on the cause of infertility, there are many options available to an infertile couple. ■

the doctor

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Living HEALTHY

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TESTOSTERONE MEANS A LOT TO A GUY. It affects your sex drive, sperm production, and helps maintain muscle and bone density. But between the ages of 35 and 65, many men experience a drop in hormones, including testosterone. This condition is known as aging male syndrome (AMS).

WHAT DOES AMS LOOK LIKE?

Maybe you've seen AMS in your bathroom mirror. Physical symptoms of lowered testosterone include:

- Weight gain
- Muscle loss
- Sleep problems

Testosterone decline may also make you feel more irritable or angry, depressed, fatigued, or easily distracted. Your partner may have noticed that you seem less interested in sex or have trouble getting or keeping an erection.

TREATING AMS

If any of these symptoms of low testosterone bother you, see your doctor. Each man has a different normal level of testosterone. A blood test can show whether your testosterone level is low or has dropped from a previous test.

Your doctor may suggest treatment with testosterone replacement therapy (TRT). TRT is considered safe for most men. It's important to have regular checkups before and during treatment. If you qualify for treatment, TRT could help you see your old self in the mirror. ■

the doctor

Paul Chan, M.D.
Urology

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