



## Diabetes and impotence

Impotence means you cannot have an erection sufficient to perform sexual intercourse. Impotence is a common problem for men and is more common in men with diabetes. Many men experience short term episodes of impotence but, for about one in 10 men, the problem may continue.

### Impotence has various causes

Impotence can be caused by physical and psychological reasons, for example:

- Stress, anxiety and nervousness
- Problems in relationships
- Poor health
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Some medications
- Some operations
- Low levels of the male hormone testosterone.

### The relationship between diabetes and impotence is not clear

The reasons why men with diabetes are more prone to problems with impotence are not fully understood. Some people with diabetes suffer from hardened arteries. This may contribute to impotence by restricting the flow of blood to the penis. Nerve damage, another problem for people with diabetes, may also contribute to impotence.

If blood glucose levels are kept in the normal range, it will help reduce the chance of these problems occurring.

### See your doctor to find the cause of impotence

The treatment for impotence depends on the cause. It's important to discuss the problem with your doctor. Often a few simple questions by the doctor will help to determine if the problem is physical or psychological.

### Causes can be physical or psychological

Physical impotence happens over a period of months or years and is often a gradual loss of function. If erections still occur spontaneously overnight or in the morning, this indicates that the problem may be psychological.

### Tests can help find answers

Tests can determine if the blood flow to the penis is affected. Blood tests can also help to determine if hormone problems are causing the impotence.

### How impotence can be treated

There are many treatment alternatives for impotence. You should discuss the options with your doctor.

Treatments depend on the cause of the impotence.

- **Psychological causes** - it may help to treat the causes of stress. Counselling can be also be successful, particularly if the partner is involved.
- **Physical causes** - there are several treatments which depend on the cause. If the problem is related to nerve damage or poor blood supply, options include a range of treatments, from drugs to surgery.

### When to see your doctor

See your doctor if you notice any change in sexual functioning.

### Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your diabetes specialist
- Diabetes educator
- Community health centre
- International Diabetes Institute Tel. (03) 9258 5000
- Diabetes Australia Tel. (03) 9654 8777.

### Things to remember

- Impotence is a common problem for men.
- There are many effective treatments available for impotence.
- It's important to find the cause of the problem so as to be able to select the right treatment.
- Discuss the problem with your doctor as soon as you notice a change.

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