

Sexual Advice Association

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Sexual Dysfunction and Diabetes

What is the problem?

Unfortunately diabetes can damage the circulation and nervous system. As a man's erection depends on a healthy circulation and nervous system erectile dysfunction (ED) is common in men with diabetes. ED affects over 50% of men with type 2 diabetes. Importantly, people with diabetes are also vulnerable to circulatory problems elsewhere including the coronary arteries to the heart, and also the circulation to the kidneys. We now recognise that a person with diabetes and no heart history is so much at risk of a heart problem that we treat them as if he or she has already had a heart attack.

ED in people with diabetes

As well as being common overall it is now clear that ED occurring before a heart condition can predict an increased risk of future heart problems. A man with ED and type 2 diabetes has a 34% chance of having coronary artery disease he doesn't know about, compared with someone with type 2 diabetic without ED who only has a 4% chance. This means ED occurring in a person with diabetes must be acted on as soon as possible not only to treat the ED but to use treatment to reduce the risk of heart disease.

Can the ED be treated?

There is no reason not to. All treatments can be used depending on their success. Because diabetes damages both the arteries and nerves to the penis the Viagra, Cialis and Levitra drugs are less successful and ***should always be used in the top dose*** (success occurs in about 60% of men) compared with 80% or more in men without diabetes. As well as treating the ED, other treatments will be used to protect the heart, kidneys and circulation from damage due to the diabetes.

Can female sexual dysfunction (FSD) occur in diabetics?

Unfortunately it is quite common in diabetics – please consult our separate factsheet.

What is the Take Home Message?

Sexual dysfunction is common in people with diabetes but very treatable. It does identify someone at risk of coronary disease. All people with diabetes with ED or FSD should not delay in discussing their problem with a healthcare professional.

An invitation

..... to enrol as a friend of The Sexual Advice Association. For a small annual subscription you will know that you are contributing to a charity that helps overcome the problems of male and female sexual dysfunction. If you are interested please telephone or write for an application form or complete our on-line registration form.

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