



THE
**PEOPLE'S
PHARMACY**

Graedons' Guide to

Drugs That Affect Sexuality

King Features

Libido

Sexual desire can be affected by many different factors. Romance, psychology, stress, hormones and drugs can all stimulate or sabotage passion. Because it is hard to monitor, people may not realize that a medicine has robbed them of their normal libido.

Sex isn't easy to talk about. It is, after all, one of the most intimate of human activities. People may have been married for decades and still be too embarrassed to discuss their feelings and fears about sex.

Physicians are not exempt from embarrassment. They too may be uncomfortable discussing this sensitive topic with patients. If a person doesn't bring up the topic of sexual dysfunction, and sometimes even if he does, the doctor may try to ignore it. The ability to enjoy sexual relations can be affected by a number of factors. They include stress, physical injury, diabetes, atherosclerosis, nerve damage, hormonal imbalance, other disease conditions and psychological hang-ups.

For years health professionals concentrated on mental causes of impotence or loss of libido. Many practitioners were convinced that women who complained of low sex drive or lack of orgasm were "frigid." Men who had difficulty achiev-

ing an erection were assumed to suffer from "performance anxiety," guilt, or fear of castration. Blaming the victim was a convenient way to get the doctor off the hook, but it now appears that this approach was misplaced and unproductive.

Research indicates that three-fourths or more of those experiencing erection difficulties have some underlying physiological problem or medication complication. Physicians rarely mention that the medicines they prescribe might have sexual side effects. They often worry that patients might be reluctant to swallow pills that could interfere with this basic human drive. But think of the devastation to a relationship when a lack of desire or ability is attributed to old age or disinterest. How much better if the true cause can be uncovered and treated, even if it means finding another medicine less likely to cause sexual difficulties.

FEMALE SEXUALITY

Drug companies have generally been unenthusiastic when it comes to studying the sexual side effects of medicine. There have been few really well-constructed studies comparing one drug with another regarding negative or positive effects on libido or performance. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has rarely required any in-depth review of this sensitive subject. Nevertheless, reports of sexual dysfunction do occasionally end up in the medical literature. This is especially true for men because when the equipment starts to fail it is fairly obvious.

Women, on the other hand, have been virtually ignored. There is no obvious corollary to impotence. Even if a woman becomes less interested in sexual activity or has difficulty achieving orgasm, she can still participate in love-making. Consequently, sexual dysfunction in women rarely gets reported to physicians and it is unusual for such reports to be entered into drug company databases or forwarded on to the FDA.

Perhaps women are more reluctant than men to discuss this type of problem, especially if the doctor is a man. It may also be possible, although there is no proof, that women's sexual difficulties are not taken as seriously as impotence. Changes in libido can be subtle and hard to measure. But many drugs, including antidepressants, sedatives and hormones, can dampen desire.

The scarcity of literature on drugs affecting female sexuality means that women will have to rely on their own judgment. If a medication seems to be having a negative effect, patient and doctor should consider whether another medicine might be less likely to interfere with sexuality. Trial and error could be the best test, since the doctor may not be able to confirm the reaction by looking it up in a standard reference book.

Popular Diuretics

Aquatensen
Diucardin
Diulo
Diuril
Enduron
Esidrix
Exna
hydrochlorothiazide
HydroDIURIL
Hydromox
Hygroton
Metahydrin
Naqua
Naturetin
Oretic
Renese
Saluron
Zaroxolyn

Sex seems simple, but it is actually amazingly complex. There are a number of ways in which medicines can interfere with the process of sexual satisfaction. First, they can mess with your mind. Lots of drugs can affect libido. They may do this indirectly by causing drowsiness, lethargy, depression, confusion or weight gain. Some drugs also have a direct impact on brain chemistry. There is a growing recognition that "neurotransmitters"--the chemical messengers of the brain--are critical to sexual interest and performance. They can be easily disrupted by a wide variety of medications, including anti-depressants such as **Anafranil** (clomipramine), **Asendin** (amoxapine), **Elavil** (amitriptyline), **Marplan** (isocarboxazid), **Nardil** (phenelzine), **Parnate** (tranylcypromine) and **Prozac** (fluoxetine).

Not only do such medications affect sexual desire, they can also interfere with the ability to achieve orgasm. This is a side effect that is rarely mentioned by health professionals. Yet it can be one of the most frustrating sexual complications of all. Imagine a woman who has had a satisfying relationship with her partner for years. Then she is put on **Prozac** for mild depression or perhaps an eating disorder. Gradually, she may find it more difficult to reach climax. In such a situation sexual relations can easily become strained. The male partner may feel inadequate or blame her for losing sexual interest.

Men are also vulnerable to problems with orgasm. Many medications can delay or prevent ejaculation. Major tranquilizers like **Mellaril** (thioridazine), **Prolixin** (fluphenazine), **Stelazine** (trifluoperazine) and **Thorazine** (chlorpromazine) are just a few of the drugs that can interfere with normal release of semen. Anti-anxiety drugs such as **Valium** (diazepam) and **Xanax** (alprazolam) can alter ejaculation. Even blood pressure pills like **Catapres** (clonidine), **Normodyne** and **Trandate** (labetalol) and **Aldomet** (methyldopa) may lead to ejaculatory problems.

Impotence & Pills

Teenage males often worry about experiencing arousal at the most inappropriate times. A daydream, a picture or a passing comment can trigger an embarrassing erection. Older men, however, are more likely to be concerned about their ability to achieve or maintain an erection. This process is a lot more complicated than most people would guess. Nerves, blood vessels and hormones must interact in a dynamic harmony for an erection to occur. If there's a glitch at any step along the way, whether it's emotional or physiological, frustration may be the result.

A number of health conditions can lead to this problem, including diabetes, hypertension, atherosclerosis, spinal cord injury and alcoholism. But medications can also contribute enormously to erection difficulties. Some drugs may affect nerves while others may act on hormones or circulation.

Blood pressure pills are notorious for their negative sexual side effects. Diuretics seems to be especially problematic even though physicians think of them as mild drugs. These medications are prescribed routinely with barely a mention of side effects and rarely a word about sexual toxicity. Nevertheless, compounds like hydrochlorothiazide (found in **Dyazide**, **Esidrix**, **HydroDIURIL**, **Hydropres**, **Inderide**, **Maxzide**, **Moduretic**, and many others) can cause impotence in some men. So can many other kinds of anti-hypertensive medications, such as **Aldomet** (methyldopa), **Calan** (verapamil), **Catapres** (clonidine), **Inderal** (propranolol), **Isoptin** (verapamil), **Lopressor** (metoprolol), **Tenex** (guanfacine) and **Verelan** (verapamil).

People aren't stupid, so it comes as no surprise that many men simply stop taking their blood pressure medicine once they discover erection difficulties. This is a mistake. Alternatives are available that may not cause such problems. Never stop taking any blood pressure pill without a doctor's supervision.

Drugs with Sexual Side Effects

Here is a list of medicines reported to impair sexual interest or ability in some people. Keep in mind that the Food and Drug Administration does not have an organized, scientific way of collecting accurate information about sexual side effects. Cases accumulate in a hit-or-miss manner and may not actually reflect the likelihood that a medicine will interfere with sexuality. In many cases only a minority of the people taking the medication will experience sexual difficulties. Don't jump to conclusions, and don't stop taking your medicine on your own. If you are having trouble, be sure to discuss it with a knowledgeable physician. Just because a drug is not listed does not mean it has proven sexually benign.

<i>Brand Name</i>	<i>Generic Name</i>	<i>Effects Reported</i>
Adalat	nifedipine	impotence
Adapin	doxepin	lower libido; trouble with ejaculation
Aldactone	spironolactone	lower libido; impotence
Aldomet	methyldopa	less libido; trouble with orgasm (f) or ejaculation (m); impotence
Altace	ramipril	impotence (rare)
Anafranil	clomipramine	change in libido; trouble with orgasm (f) or ejaculation (m)(common); impotence (up to 20%); orgasm triggered by yawning
Anaprox	naproxen	impotence
Apresoline	hydralazine	impotence (uncommon)
Artane	trihexyphenidyl	impotence
Asendin	amoxapine	change in libido; impotence; painful ejaculation
Ativan	lorazepam	less libido
Atromid-S	clofibrate	lower libido; impotence
Aventyl	nortriptyline	lower libido; impotence
Axid	nizatadine	impotence
Bentyl	dicyclomine	impotence
Blocadren	timolol	impotence (uncommon); lower libido
Bumex	bumetanide	premature ejaculation; impotence (rare)
BuSpar	buspirone	change in libido (uncommon); impotence (rare); delayed ejaculation (rare)
Calan	verapamil	impotence (uncommon)
Capoten	captopril	impotence (apparently uncommon)
Cardene	nicardipine	impotence (rare)
Cardizem	diltiazem	less libido; impotence (rare)
Cardura	doxazosin	sexual difficulties, unspecified (2%)
Cartrol	carteolol	impotence
Catapres	clonidine	lower libido; impotence; slowed ejaculation
Clozaril	clozapine	impotence; prolonged painful erection
Cogentin	benztropine	impotence
Combipres	chlorthalidone/clonidine	impotence; lower libido; less sexual activity
Compazine	prochlorperazine	impotence; ejaculation problems; prolonged painful erection
Corgard	nadolol	less libido; impotence
Cytotec	misoprostol	impotence; less libido (both infrequent)
Danocrine	danazol	change in libido
Depo-Provera	medroxyprogesterone	change in libido; trouble with orgasm
Desyrel	trazodone	prolonged painful erection; change in libido (m & f);trouble with orgasm (f) or ejaculation (m)
Diamox	acetazolamide	less libido; impotence
Dibenzyline	phenoxybenzamine	trouble with ejaculation
Dilantin	phenytoin	less libido; impotence; prolonged & painful erection
Dipentum	olsalazine	impotence (rare)

Brand Name	Generic Name	Effects Reported
Ditropan	oxybutynin	impotence
Diupres	chlorothiazide/reserpine	lower libido; impotence
Diuril	chlorothiazide	sexual difficulties
Dolophine	methadone	lower libido; impotence; no orgasm (m&f); delayed ejaculation
Donnatal	phenobarbital/hyoscyamine/ atropine/scopolamine	impotence
Dopar	levodopa	increased libido
Doral	quazepam	less libido; impotence
Dyazide	hydrochlorothiazide/triamterene	sexual difficulties; impotence
DynaCirc	isradipine	lower libido; impotence (uncommon)
Elavil	amitriptyline	less libido; impotence; no ejaculation
Eldepryl	selegiline	sexual difficulties
Endep	amitriptyline	less libido; impotence; no ejaculation
Esidrix	hydrochlorothiazide	impotence
Esimil	guanethidine/hydrochlorothiazide	ejaculation problems; impotence; prolonged painful erection
Eskalith	lithium	sexual difficulties; impotence
Ethmazine	morizine	impotence (less than 2%)
Eulexin	flutamide	loss of libido; impotence (up to 33%)
Folex	methotrexate	loss of libido; impotence
Halcion	triazolam	changes in libido
Haldol	haloperidol	impotence; change in libido; painful ejacula- tion; prolonged painful erection
HydroDIURIL	hydrochlorothiazide	impotence
Hylarel	guanadrel	less libido; impotence; ejaculation problems
Hytrin	terazosin	lower libido (rare); impotence
Inderal	propranolol	loss of libido (m&f); impotence (rare)
Inderide	propranolol/hydrochlorothiazide	loss of libido (m&f); impotence (rare)
Ismelin	guanethidine	ejaculation problems; impotence; prolonged painful erection
Isoptin	verapamil	impotence (uncommon)
Lanoxin	digoxin	less libido; impotence
Larodopa	levodopa	higher libido; prolonged & painful erection
Librax	chlordiazepoxide/clidinium	change in libido; impotence
Limbitrol	chlordiazepoxide/amitriptyline	change in libido
Lithobid	lithium	sexual difficulties; impotence
Lopid	gemfibrozil	less libido; impotence
Lopressor	metoprolol	impotence
Lozol	indapamide	lower libido; impotence (less than 5%)
Ludiomil	maprotiline	less libido; impotence (rare)
Lupron	leuprolide	impotence (common); lower libido
Marplan	isocarboxazid	impotence
Maxzide	hydrochlorothiazide/triamterene	sexual difficulties; impotence
Megace	megestrol	change in libido; trouble with orgasm
Mellaril	thioridazine	change in libido; impotence; prolonged, painful erection; trouble with orgasm
Minipress	prazosin	impotence; prolonged painful erection (rare)
Moduretic	amiloride/hydrochlorothiazide	less libido; impotence
Monopril	fosinopril	sexual difficulties
Mysoline	primidone	change in libido; impotence (uncommon)
Naprosyn	naproxen	impotence
Nardil	phenelzine	impotence; lack of orgasm; ejaculation prob- lems; prolonged and painful erections

Brand Name	Generic Name	Effects Reported
Navane	thiothixene	impotence; trouble with ejaculation; prolonged and painful erections
Nizoral	ketoconazole	impotence; less libido
Normodyne	labetalol	impotence; ejaculation problems; less libido; painful & prolonged erection
Normozide	labetalol/hydrochlorothiazide	impotence; ejaculation problems; less libido; painful & prolonged erection
Norpace	disopyramide	impotence
Norpramin	desipramine	impotence; less libido; trouble with orgasm
Oretic	hydrochlorothiazide	impotence
Pamelor	nortriptyline	impotence; less libido
Parnate	tranylcypromine	impotence; problems with ejaculation
Pepcid	famotidine	impotence (rare)
Pertofrane	desipramine	impotence; less libido; trouble with orgasm
Plendil	felodipine	less libido; impotence
Prinivil	lisinopril	impotence (quite rare)
Pro-Banthine	propantheline	impotence
Procardia	nifedipine	impotence
Prolixin	fluphenazine	lower libido; impotence; trouble with ejaculation; prolonged painful erection
Provera	medroxyprogesterone	change in libido; trouble with orgasm
Prozac	fluoxetine	lower libido; problems with orgasm (f) & ejaculation (m); impotence (rare); lower libido; impotence
Reglan	metoclopramide	lower libido; impotence
Rheumatrex	methotrexate	loss of libido; impotence
Robinul	glycopyrrolate	impotence
Rocaltrol	calcitriol	lower libido
Serax	oxazepam	change in libido
Serentil	mesoridazine	impotence; ejaculation problems; prolonged painful erection
Sinemet	carbidopa/levodopa	increased libido; prolonged painful erection
Sinequan	doxepin	less libido; trouble with ejaculation
Stelazine	trifluoperazine	impotence; problems with ejaculation
Tagamet	cimetidine	less libido (m&f); impotence
Tegretol	carbamazepine	impotence
Tenex	guanfacine	impotence; lower libido
Tenormin	atenolol	impotence (uncommon)
Thorazine	chlorpromazine	less libido; impotence; prolonged painful erection; no ejaculation
Timoptic	timolol	less libido (m&f); impotence
Tofranil	imipramine	less libido; impotence; trouble with orgasm
Trandate	labetalol	impotence; ejaculation problems; less libido; painful & prolonged erection
Valium	diazepam	less libido; impotence; trouble with orgasm (f) or ejaculation (m)
Vasotec	enalapril	impotence (rare)
Verelan	verapamil	impotence (uncommon)
Visken	pindolol	impotence (uncommon)
Voltaren	diclofenac	impotence (rare)
Wellbutrin	bupropion	sexual difficulties; impotence
Xanax	alprazolam	less libido; trouble with ejaculation (m) & orgasm (f)
Zantac	ranitidine	less libido; impotence (occasional)
Zestril	lisinopril	impotence (quite rare)
Zoloft	sertraline	sexual difficulties

ALTERNATIVES LESS LIKELY TO CAUSE SEXUAL PROBLEMS

Finding a medicine that produces the desired effect without wrecking your love life can be a challenge. First, it will take excellent communication with a physician who is sensitive to issues of sexuality. Next it may require patience and persistence. A drug that works for one person may be a complete failure for someone else. And never stop taking any medicine without close medical supervision. That could be a prescription for disaster!

When it comes to high blood pressure, diuretics are often the doctor's first choice, but they may not be as benign as once thought. **Lozol** (indapamide) appears to be less of a problem than some of the other common water pills. Dr. Theresa Crenshaw, the country's leading expert on sexual pharmacology, recommends blood pressure pills like **Capoten** (captopril) or calcium channel blockers such as **Cardene** (nicardipine), **Cardizem** (diltiazem) or **Plendil** (felodipine). Another option she offers is **Minipress** (prazosin).

Antidepressants are notorious for interfering with sexuality. Even **Prozac**, one of the most popular new medications can cause lowered libido, lack of orgasm or even impotence. Dr. Crenshaw has found that **Wellbutrin** (bupropion) and **Desyrel** (trazodone) are much less likely to interfere with sexual enjoyment.

Drugs prescribed for heartburn and stomach acid can also cause sexual dysfunction. **Tagamet** (cimetidine) and **Reglan** (metoclopramide) have been reported to cause impotence and diminished desire. **Zantac** (ranitidine), **Axid** (nizatadine) and **Pepcid** (famotidine) may be less likely to disrupt sexuality. No matter what condition is being treated, finding a safe and effective therapy will require careful collaboration between patient and physician.

Treating Impotence

Not long ago, if a man had difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection, there was little his doctor could offer except sympathy. Today, there are a number of treatment options that give men the possibility of resuming an active sex life. No matter which approach is considered, however, the results will be best when both partners are involved in the decision making. A satisfying love life goes way beyond intercourse. Tenderness, romance, cuddling and mutual support are all essential elements. Counseling can be extremely helpful. You can obtain a list of certified counselors by sending \$2 and a self-addressed stamped envelope to the American Association of Sex Therapists: 435 N. Michigan Avenue No. 1717; Chicago, IL 60611.

Obviously, if a drug is to blame for impotence, the first consideration is whether another medication would be equally effective without causing this unpleasant side effect. Even when the problem is not due to medicine, a drug may be of help in overcoming erection difficulties. One of the first prescription medicines shown useful was yohimbine, made from the bark of a west African tree, the yohimb. Medical tests indicate yohimbine may be effective in up to half the men who take it, whether the cause of erection failure is psychological or biological. Yohimbine is not appropriate for everyone. Side effects can include high blood pressure, changes in heart rhythm, rapid pulse, headache and anxiety attacks.

Another medicine that can often produce an erection is papaverine injected directly into the penis with a fine needle. Many men find the technique extremely useful, as it generally produces an erection lasting from 30 to 60 minutes. Papaverine can help erection difficulties brought on by a variety of conditions, including some spinal cord injuries or local nerve damage. Urologists are the physicians most knowledgeable about prescribing papaverine or other "erection injections." They sometimes add **Regitine** (phenolamine) or PGE1. This treatment may cause temporary burning or stinging at the injection site or prolonged erections that could cause damage if left untreated. Fibrosis (thickening of penile tissue) is relatively uncommon but is serious enough to require careful medical monitoring.

Another option worth considering is the vacuum device. By drawing blood into the penis and trapping it there with a rubber band, these devices can often provide a satisfactory erection without the side effects of medication or the permanence of an implant.

With modern therapies, including microsurgery, impotence is now highly treatable and need not mean the end of sexual activity.

More Reading

For a more complete discussion of a variety of treatment options we highly recommend two booklets published by a company that markets a vacuum device. One is titled *Impotence: Current Diagnosis and Treatment* by Stephen W. Leslie, M.D. and the other is *A Patient's Guide for the Treatment of Impotence*. Both are available free of charge from Osborn Foundation **(800) 433-4215**.

Sources

Crenshaw, Theresa Larsen. *Sexual Pharmacology: Drugs that Affect Sexual Function*. New York: Norton, in press.

"Drugs that Cause Sexual Dysfunction: An Update." *The Medical Letter on Drugs and Therapeutics*, vol. 34, issue 876, August 7, 1992.

Physicians Desk Reference. Montvale, NJ: Medical Economics Data, 1992.

Further information is available in *Graedons' Best Medicine and 50+*, both by Joe & Teresa Graedon

