

Men's Sexual Health

THE ONE-LINE TRUTH

How a man's body works for sex, strength, and energy — the parts (penis, testes, prostate), the hormones like testosterone (the main male hormone that builds muscle, drives sex drive, and powers erections), what can go wrong (low testosterone that drains energy and desire, erectile dysfunction where the penis won't stay hard, infections in the urethra or prostate, and prostate problems that block urine flow), and how to keep everything running strong — explained straight, simple, and backed by medical evidence from the American Urological Association, Endocrine Society, and CDC so you understand what's normal, what breaks, and how to fix it.

Spot it — what you see, and why

- Trouble getting or keeping an erection firm enough for sex: Blood vessels in the penis (the tubes that carry blood) get stiff or narrow from aging, diabetes, high blood pressure, or smoking, so not enough blood flows in to keep the penis hard. Or nerves that tell the penis to fill with blood get damaged by surgery, diabetes, or injury, cutting the signal that opens the blood gates.
- Erection that starts but goes soft before finishing sex: The veins that normally trap blood inside the penis during an erection become leaky (called venous leak), letting blood flow back out too soon. Or stress and worry raise cortisol (the body's main stress hormone), which lowers testosterone and blocks the signals needed to keep blood in, so the firmness fades mid-act.
- Lower interest in sex than before: Testosterone (the main male sex hormone made in the testicles) drops with age, stress, obesity, or certain medicines, and less testosterone means lower drive for sex. Or depression lowers dopamine (a brain messenger that fuels motivation and pleasure), so interest fades even when the body still works.
- Trouble reaching orgasm or orgasm takes much longer: Nerves that carry sensation from the penis to the spinal cord slow down from diabetes, alcohol, or aging, so the brain gets weaker signals and needs more time to trigger orgasm. Or medicines like SSRIs (antidepressants) block serotonin reuptake in a way that delays the orgasm reflex, sometimes by many minutes.

- Pain during sex or after ejaculation: The prostate gland (the walnut-sized gland below the bladder that makes fluid for semen) is swollen from infection or inflammation (prostatitis), squeezing nearby nerves. Or scar tissue builds up in the urethra (the tube that carries urine and semen out) from old infection or injury, causing sharp pain when semen passes through.
- Ejaculation that happens too quickly (within 1–2 minutes of starting sex): The brain's serotonin system (which normally puts the brakes on ejaculation) is less active, either from genetics or anxiety, so the reflex fires too soon. Or the prostate and seminal vesicles (the glands that hold semen) become extra-sensitive from inflammation, triggering release early before you want it.

Your top priorities at the bedside

1. Screen blood pressure, fasting glucose, and lipid panel (cholesterol) at every wellness visit — why: Erectile dysfunction shares the same vascular (blood vessel) risk factors as heart disease; 50 percent of men with diabetes and 40 percent with high blood pressure have erectile problems, so treating these conditions improves both heart health and sexual function
2. Teach testicular self-exam monthly—roll each testicle gently between thumb and fingers feeling for hard lumps, size changes, or heaviness — why: Testicular cancer grows fast but is 95 percent curable when caught early; monthly self-exam in the shower (when scrotum is relaxed) detects abnormal masses before symptoms appear, especially in men age 15 to 35
3. Verify safe use of phosphodiesterase-5 inhibitors (sildenafil, tadalafil) by checking medication list for nitrates and measuring baseline blood pressure — why: PDE5 inhibitors relax blood vessels; when combined with nitrates the blood pressure can drop below 90/60 causing dizziness, fainting, or heart attack; these drugs also need caution in men taking 3 or more blood-pressure medications