

## Definition & Facts for Erectile Dysfunction

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### What is erectile dysfunction?

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is a condition in which you are unable to get or keep an [erection](#) firm enough for satisfactory sexual intercourse. ED can be a short-term or long-term problem. You have ED when you

- can get an erection sometimes, but not every time you want to have sex
- can get an erection, but it does not last long enough for fulfilling or satisfactory sex
- are unable to get an erection at any time

Health care professionals, such as primary care providers and [urologists](#), often can treat ED. Although ED is very common, it is not a normal part of aging. Talk with a health care professional if you have any [ED symptoms](#). ED could be a sign of a more serious health problem.

You may find it embarrassing and difficult to talk with a health care professional about ED. However, remember that a healthy sex life can improve your quality of life and is part of a healthy life overall. Health care professionals, especially urologists, are trained to speak to people about many kinds of sexual problems.

### Does erectile dysfunction have another name?

ED is sometimes called impotence, but health care professionals use this term less often now so it won't be confused with other, nonmedical meanings of the word.

### How common is erectile dysfunction?

ED is very common. It affects about 30 million men in the United States.<sup>1</sup>



Although erectile dysfunction (ED) is very common, it is not a normal part of aging; talk with your health care professional about treatment.

### Who is more likely to develop erectile dysfunction?

You are more likely to develop ED if you

- are older
- have certain diseases or conditions
- take certain medicines
- have certain psychological or emotional issues
- have certain health-related factors or behaviors, such as [overweight](#) or smoking

[Read about how certain factors can cause or contribute to ED.](#)

### What are the complications of erectile dysfunction?

Complications of ED may include

- an unfulfilled sex life

- an unbalanced sex life
- a loss of intimacy between you and a partner, resulting in a strained relationship
- [depression](#) <sup>NIH</sup>, [anxiety](#) <sup>NIH</sup>, and low self-esteem
- being unable to get a partner pregnant

Depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem can also contribute to ED, creating a cycle of health problems.

## References

[1] Nunes KP, Labazi H, Webb RC. New insights into hypertension-associated erectile dysfunction. *Current Opinion in Nephrology and Hypertension*. 2012;21(2):163–170.





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