

Erectile dysfunction

Erectile dysfunction is defined as the insufficient function of the penis for sexual intercourse. It may affect the engorgement of the penis (tumescence), the stiffness of the penis (rigidity) and the duration of the erection.

An erection is a complex and comprehensive process in the male body, in which the following organs and systems are involved: brain, spinal cord, pelvic nerve pathways, penile nerves, penile blood vessels and the penis itself.

Erectile dysfunction may thus affect any of the above-mentioned organs. The older a man grows, the more often erectile dysfunction occurs; for example, about 10% of all men aged between 40 and 50 years and more than 50% of all men aged between 70 and 80 years are affected.

The causes of erectile dysfunction vary greatly; however, it should be emphasized that many common diseases in our society may manifest themselves as erectile dysfunction resulting from damage to blood vessels and nerves.

The following causes should be considered:

- Cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension and coronary heart disease (cardiac infarction)
- Metabolic diseases such as diabetes mellitus or disorders of fat metabolism such as high cholesterol levels
- Nerve injury during pelvic surgeries (prostate or rectal surgeries)
- Diseases of the nervous system and mental disorders (e.g. Parkinson's disease or depression)
- Erectile dysfunction as a side effect of medicines (e.g. beta blockers)
- Hormonal disorders such as testosterone deficiency or hypothyroidism

Further information:

[Direct link to diagnosis](#)

[Direct link to treatment](#)