

Patient information from Gordon Muir, Consultant Urological Surgeon

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PDE-5 Inhibitor medications

Viagra (Sildenafil,) Cialis (Tadalafil,) Spedra (Avanafil) and Levitra (Vardenafil)

These drugs have changed the face of impotence management. They are very effective drugs with few serious side effects when used properly.

It is important to remember that they work by enabling a normal response to sexual stimulation and thus, unlike other methods of treating erectile difficulties, it requires the right environment and stimulation to be effective.

Viagra (also now available as generic sildenafil)

Most men start by trying the 50mg tablet several times and if this is effective may be able to drop the dose to 25mg. If the 50mg preparation does not give the desired effect then 100mg can be tried. Long term, the 100mg dose seems the most popular. It is important to realise that it may take a number of tries to find out if the drug will work, especially if you have not been having erections for some time. It seems sensible to allow around six to eight attempts to fully assess the activity of the drug in any individual.

Most men take the drug one to two hours before they wish to make love and find it is effective for up to twelve hours after this time. Heavy or fatty meals will tend to slow down its effect by an hour or so, but not diminish it.

Levitra has similar activity to Viagra and is available in 10 and 20mg dosage. There is a preparation of Levitra which is placed under the tongue and which has a slightly faster onset of action.

Cialis

Cialis has a longer duration of action than Viagra or Levitra, meaning that the penis will be responsive for a greater time period.

Most men start by trying the 10mg tablets several times and if this is effective may be able to drop the dose to 5mg. If the 10mg preparation does not give the desired effect then 20mg can be tried. Long term, the 20mg dose seems the most popular. It is important to realise that it may take a number of tries to find out if the drug will work, especially if you have not been having erections for some time. It seems sensible to allow around six to eight attempts to fully assess the activity of the drug in any individual.

Most men take the drug one to two hours before they wish to make love and find it is effective for up to forty eight hours after this time. It is not affected by eating.

After a dose has been established you should review matters with your physician.

Cialis is now available in a once daily dose (usually 5mg) which can avoid the need for planning and is increasingly popular with younger patients. This preparation also has beneficial effects on urinary symptoms and is licensed for men with this problem also. The great majority of my patients seem to prefer the daily dose, which avoids the need for planning of intimacy.

Spedra

The newest of the PDE5 inhibitor drugs to become available, Spedra has a similar duration of action to Viagra. However it seems to have a much faster onset of action than the other

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medications, so if planning is an issue then men and their partners may find it very useful and effective. It comes in doses from 50mg to 200mg.

Side effects – rare except with the highest dose for each tablet

Viagra - can have some minor side effects including headache, flushing and blurred vision. It may also cause some heartburn. These are generally not serious and most men who experience them do not stop treatment as a result.

Cialis – can cause headache, flushing, indigestion and rarely muscle cramps. These side effects are generally not serious and most men who experience them do not stop treatment as a result.

Levitra, Spedra – can cause headache, flushing, indigestion and rarely muscle cramps. These side effects are generally not serious and most men who experience them do not stop treatment as a result.

It is important that you have due regard to your general fitness and any specific areas of worry should be mentioned to the doctor prescribing for you.

For men who are very anxious or who have not had erections for a long time it is important to be sure that the top dose of the medicine has been tried at least four times, in a stress free environment (eg at home on one's own with the phone switched off and the door locked.)

The final cautionary note is to mention these drugs do have interactions with a number of other drugs. Most of these are mild and may simply require a closer eye to be kept on the dosage, but in a group of drugs called Nitrates (usually given for cardiac pain, but including amyl nitrate “poppers”) there is a potentially fatal lowering of the blood pressure if taken concurrently. It is thus essential that if any physician who is considering prescribing any drug you must say that you are using the erectile dysfunction treatment.

It may well be that you will find the penis becomes more naturally responsive after some weeks or months of treatment and if this is the case it is quite in order to experiment with lower dose or to go without the medication as you feel necessary. Should the medication not work, remember there are other therapies available, so do not suffer in silence.

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