

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Michiel Rorick

What Drug Companies Don't Tell Men

Researchers have discovered that erectile dysfunction (ED) is an early predictor of cardiovascular disease: in particular, disease affecting the left ventricular portion of the heart (Int J Clin Pract 2007;61:361-6).

And since ED often occurs several years before any clinical manifestation of cardiovascular disease, "ED should be seen as a warning of early atherosclerotic disease and an opportunity for doctor and patient to initiate preventive measures." (*Urologe A* 2006;45:N/A.)

Approximately 18 million men in the US currently suffer ED, according to an article in the February 2007 issue of the *American Journal of Medicine*. Researchers in Canada estimate that ED affects 50 percent of the Canadian male population, while the Australian Centre of Excellence in Men's Reproductive Health estimates the number of sufferers at over 1 million men countrywide.

Dr. Rorick wants to help spread the word that ED is an often-overlooked symptom of cardiovascular disease and that drugs used to treat ED have a number of potentially serious side effects. Why? Because Dr. Rorick is committed to helping patients adopt

the *chiropractic lifestyle*, a way of life that focuses on preventing health problems, rather than merely masking symptoms with medication.

The Diabetes Connection

Men with diabetes — or at high risk of developing diabetes — are more likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease and ED than nondiabetics. That's because diabetes damages blood vessels and triggers nerve injury known as peripheral neuropathy.

In a study of 323 men with newly diagnosed Type 2 diabetes, approximately one third also had ED (*BJU Int* 2007;99:130-4).

Prevent ED Naturally

The same lifestyle factors that ward off diabetes and cardiovascular disease also prevent ED. These include consuming a wholesome diet and reducing stress. Regular daily exercise is also key.



"The association between erectile dysfunction and lack of physical activity suggests that lifestyle changes, especially increasing exercise level, may be effective non-pharmacological treatments," say researchers from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Johns Hopkins Hospital (*Am J Med* 2007;120:151-7).

For those whose ED is linked to obesity and Type 2 diabetes, the condition is often reversible with weight loss and glucose control (*JAMA* 2004;291:2978).



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Kick the Habit

It's also important to avoid smoking and stay clear of other people's "passive smoke." That's because those who inhale toxic cigarette fumes have higher rates of vascular disease than their smoke-free counterparts.

Big Business

ED medications are significant profit generators for pharmaceutical companies. Snazzy, aggressive direct-to-consumer marketing campaigns encourage men to request ED medications, rather than first focusing on lifestyle changes.

Keep in mind that these campaigns are focused on selling medication, not on proper patient education.

Drugs and Side Effects

ED medications include Cialis™ (Lilly), Viagra™ (Pfizer) and Levitra™ (GlaxoSmithKline).

When discussing the true cost of a drug on consumer health, it's important to consider side effects. For instance, new research shows that sildenafil (marketed as Viagra™) causes nasal congestion in 20 percent of men (*J Urol* 2007;177:258-61).

Sildenafil should also be used with

caution in patients who take alpha-blockers for high blood pressure, enlarged prostate or glaucoma because co-administration may lead to abnormally low blood pressure in some individuals (*Urology* 2006;68:47-60).

The entire class of ED drugs can also cause vision changes, according to experts at the Casey Eye Institute, Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, Ore. Sildenafil, in particular, has been reported to cause several changes in visual perception and is a possible cause of optic neuropathy (*Drugs* 2007;67:75-93).

Other Causes of ED

Although cardiovascular disease is strongly linked to ED, there are other instigators as well.

Medications

A plethora of drugs may induce ED, including those for high blood pressure, cholesterol and epilepsy. Antidepressants, diuretics, cancer treatments and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are additional catalysts.

Diseases of the Nervous System

ED may be a symptom of multiple sclerosis (MS) and other degenerative diseases of the nervous system.

Emotional Stress

A high-stress life may instigate ED in some men, according to researchers. This may be due to the link between stress and cardiovascular disease, or to other factors.

Injury and Accidents

ED can be caused by spinal cord injury, injury to male organs or a pelvic fracture: the latter of which may damage nerves or blood vessels.

Excessive Alcohol Use

Alcoholism can cause permanent nerve damage, resulting in impotence. It also dulls the central nervous system, impairing sexual response.

Illegal Drug Use

Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, barbiturates and amphetamines affect the central nervous system. This, in turn, leads to ED.

Focus on Prevention

ED can exact a heavy emotional toll. But clinical evidence overwhelmingly supports the fact it may be a blessing in disguise when viewed as an early indicator of cardiovascular disease.

And that's where chiropractic's prevention-oriented approach to health care comes in. Instead of relying on drugs and being subject to a host of unwanted side effects, talk to your doctor about lifestyle changes you can make to prevent ED and reduce your risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

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