



# Men's Health:

## The Connection between Diabetes and Sexual Dysfunction



Men with diabetes are more likely to experience sexual difficulties and erectile dysfunction (ED) 10-15 years sooner than men without diabetes. The problems also happen three times as often and are more severe.<sup>1</sup> Some men with prediabetes or diabetes may not talk about sexual difficulties because they feel embarrassed. Others may not realize that these issues are related to their high blood sugar levels. By talking to your healthcare provider, you can reduce your risk for future complications and improve your sex life.

### How is sexual health connected to high blood sugar?

Men with prediabetes and diabetes may experience sexual difficulties and ED because high blood sugars can damage nerves and block blood vessels, decreasing blood flow in the penis, needed to have an erection.

High blood sugar levels may result from the following:

- unhealthy eating habits
- little to no physical activity
- not taking diabetes medication

**CDC research has shown that 95% of ED can be treated successfully.<sup>2</sup>**

### Other possible issues related to sex for men with prediabetes:<sup>3</sup>

**Not wanting to have sex (low libido or lack of arousal):** High blood sugar levels can lower testosterone and result in a lack of interest in sex.

**Tip:** Physical activity and eating healthy can help increase testosterone by lowering blood sugar levels.

**Taking long to release your sperm (ejaculate):** Men can experience a decrease in blood flow, making it hard to have an orgasm or ejaculate. This is linked to nerve damage in the legs and feet that can happen because of high blood sugar levels.

**Pain during sex:** Men can feel pain when having sex and may be at higher risk for developing Peyronie's disease. This is a condition where scar tissue develops inside the penis that can cause painful erections.<sup>4</sup>

## Make lifestyle changes to lower risks of sexual difficulties

Adding healthy habits into your day can help prevent problems with sex. Try making lifestyle changes, like the ones below, to lower your risks even more:



**Increase physical activity:** Start with small steps—take a walk, go for a run, do squats, or engage in physical activity at home.



**Eat healthier foods:** Add foods like fish, leafy greens (spinach, romaine lettuce, cabbage), and eggs to your meals. Watch your portions and eat small amounts.



**Increase water intake:** Drink plenty of water, instead of alcohol or caffeine.



**Manage your stress:** Spend time with family and friends, get connected to a church or faith community, or find someone that is trusted to talk to. Avoid smoking and overuse of alcohol or other drugs.



### **Keep up with medical appointments and medications:**

It's important to attend appointments and take medications as prescribed. Remember, most health centers offer telehealth and can share health education virtually, if you are unable to go into the office.



### **Talk with a healthcare provider:**

Take the [prediabetes risk test](#) and discuss any questions about sexual health with a doctor. [Find a National Diabetes Prevention Program \(www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/find-a-program.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/find-a-program.html) in your area and connect with a local health center. If you have diabetes, find a Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support program (DSMES) in your area.

Discussing sexual health issues can be uncomfortable, but it is important to be open and honest with doctors regarding all health concerns—even problems with sexual function. If you are at risk for or have diabetes and concerns with sexual performance and satisfaction, connect with your healthcare provider.

## References:

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