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February 1, 2007

18 Million Men in the United States Affected by Erectile Dysfunction

Lifestyle Changes Could Improve Male Sexual Function

[Video interview with Elizabeth Selvin](#) (Quicktime required)

More than 18 million men in the United States over age 20 are affected by erectile dysfunction, according to a study by researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The prevalence of erectile dysfunction was strongly linked with age, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and a lack of physical activity. The findings also indicate that lifestyle changes, such as increased physical activity and measures to prevent cardiovascular disease and diabetes, may also prevent decreased erectile function. The study is published in the February 1, 2007, issue of the [American Journal of Medicine](#).

“Physicians should be aggressive in screening and managing middle-aged and older patients for erectile dysfunction, especially among patients with diabetes or hypertension,” said [Elizabeth Selvin](#), PhD, MPH, lead author of the study and a faculty member in the Bloomberg School of Public Health’s Department of Epidemiology. “The associations of erectile dysfunction with diabetes and cardiovascular risk factors may serve as powerful motivators for men who need to make changes in their diet and lifestyle.”

For the study, the research team analyzed data from 2,126 men who participated in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Men who reported being “sometimes able” or “never able” to get and keep an erection were categorized as having erectile dysfunction, while men who reported being “always or almost always able” or “usually able” were not.

The overall prevalence of erectile dysfunction among men in the United States was 18 percent. Men aged 70 and older were much more likely to report having erectile dysfunction compared to only 5 percent in men between the ages of 20 and 40. Nearly half of all men in the study with diabetes also had erectile dysfunction. And, almost 90 percent of all men with erectile dysfunction had at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease, including diabetes, hypertension, having poor cholesterol levels or being a current smoker. Men with erectile dysfunction were also less likely to have engaged in vigorous physical activity within the month prior to participation in the study.

“Prevalence and Risk Factors for Erectile Dysfunction in the U.S.” was written by Elizabeth Selvin, PhD, MPH, Arthur L. Burnett, MD, and [Elizabeth A. Platz](#), ScD, MPH. Selvin and Platz are with the Department of Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Platz and Burnett are with the James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

The researchers were supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health’s National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK.)

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