



Penis pump

Overview

A penis pump is one of a few treatment options for the inability to get or maintain an erection sufficient for sex (erectile dysfunction). A penis pump consists of a plastic tube that fits over the penis, a hand or battery-powered pump attached to the tube, and a band that fits around the base of the penis once it is erect (constriction ring).

A penis pump is sometimes called a vacuum pump or a vacuum erection device.

Why it's done

Erectile dysfunction is a common problem, especially following prostate surgery and in older men. Oral medications prescribed to treat erectile dysfunction include sildenafil (Viagra), vardenafil (Levitra, Staxyn), tadalafil (Cialis, Adcirca) and avanafil (Stendra).

Other erectile dysfunction treatments include medications inserted through the tip of your penis into the tube inside that carries urine and semen (urethra), shots you inject into your penis (penile injections), and surgically placed penile implants.

A penis pump might be a good choice if these treatments cause side effects, don't work or aren't safe for you.

Penis pumps can be a good erectile dysfunction treatment for several reasons:

- **Penis pumps are effective.** With practice and correct use, the majority of men can get an erection sufficient for sex.
- **Penis pumps pose less of a risk than do other treatments.** The risk of side effects or complications is lower than it is with any other erectile dysfunction treatment.
- **The overall cost is lower.** After the initial purchase, using a penis pump costs less than any other erectile dysfunction treatment.
- **Penis pumps are noninvasive.** They don't require surgery, inserting medication into the tip of your penis or penile injections.
- **Penis pumps can be used with other treatments.** A penis pump can be used along with medications or a penile implant. For some men, a combination of erectile dysfunction treatments works best.

- **Using a penis pump might help you regain erectile function after certain procedures.** For example, using a penis pump might help restore your ability to get a natural erection after prostate surgery or radiation therapy for prostate cancer.

Risks

Although penis pumps are safe for most men, there are some potential risks. For example:

- **You're at an increased risk of bleeding if you take blood-thinning medications.** Examples include warfarin (Coumadin, Jantoven) and clopidogrel (Plavix).
- **A penis pump might not be safe if you have sickle cell anemia or another blood disorder.** These conditions can make you susceptible to blood clots or bleeding.

Tell your doctor about all of your health conditions and any medications you take, including herbal supplements. This will help prevent potential problems.

Side effects

Side effects of using a penis pump can include:

- **Pinpoint-sized red dots (petechiae).** This is caused by bleeding under the surface of the skin of the penis.
- **Numbness, coldness or bluish-colored skin.** This can occur when the constriction band is in place.
- **Pain or bruising.** Knowing how to use the penis pump correctly can help you avoid injury to your penis.
- **Feeling of trapped semen.** You might feel like your semen is trapped when you ejaculate, or ejaculation might be painful. Some manufacturers make constriction rings with a small cutout that might help with this.

Penis pumps have some other possible drawbacks:

- **Unnatural-feeling erections.** Penis pumps can cause an erection that doesn't feel natural or spontaneous. You might have a lack of firmness at the base of the penis, which can allow the penis to rotate or pivot more than it would with a natural erection.
- **Awkwardness.** Use of a penis pump requires patience and understanding from both you and your partner. It might take some time to become comfortable with the device.
- **Manual coordination is required.** Penis pumps require use of the hands and fingers to operate, which can be a problem for some men or their partners.

How you prepare

When you see your doctor about erectile dysfunction, be prepared to answer a number of questions about your health and your symptoms. In some cases, erectile dysfunction has an underlying cause that can be treated.

Depending on your condition, you might need to see a doctor who specializes in treating urinary and reproductive disorders (urologist).

To determine whether a penis pump is a good treatment option for you, your doctor might ask about:

- **Any illnesses** you have now or have had in the past
- **Any injuries or surgeries** you've had, especially those involving your penis, testicles or prostate
- **What medications you take**, including herbal supplements
- **What erectile dysfunction treatments you've tried** and how well they worked

Your doctor will likely do a physical exam, which typically includes checking your genitals and feeling your pulse in arteries in different parts of your body (peripheral arteries).

Your doctor might perform a digital rectal examination (DRE) to check your prostate gland. During a DRE, your doctor will gently insert a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum to feel the surface of the prostate.

If the cause of your erectile dysfunction is already known when you see your doctor, your appointment might be less involved.

Choosing a penis pump

Some penis pumps are available without a prescription, but talk to your doctor before purchasing one. Your doctor might recommend or prescribe a specific model. That way you can be sure it suits your needs and that it's made by a reputable manufacturer.

Penis pumps available online, in magazines and sex ads might not be safe or effective. Make sure the penis pump you use has a vacuum limiter, which keeps pressure from getting too high and injuring your penis.

Before using a penis pump for the first time, you might want to trim or shave any pubic hair near the base of your penis so that it doesn't get caught in the ring.

Penis pumps for penis enlargement

Many advertisements in magazines and on the internet market penis pumps with the claim that they can be used to increase penis size, but there's no evidence that they work for this purpose. Attempting to use a penis pump specifically to enlarge your penis could cause injury.

What you can expect

Using a penis pump requires a few simple steps:

- Place the plastic tube over your penis.
- Use a hand pump or electric pump attached to the tube to create a vacuum inside the tube and pull blood into the penis.

- Once you have an erection, slip a rubber constriction ring around the base of your penis. This helps you maintain the erection by keeping blood inside the penis.
- Remove the vacuum device. The erection typically lasts long enough to have sex.

Don't leave the tension ring in place for more than 30 minutes — cutting off blood flow for too long might injure your penis.

Results

Using a penis pump won't cure erectile dysfunction, but it might create an erection firm enough for you to have sexual intercourse. You might need to combine use of a penis pump with other treatments, such as taking erectile dysfunction medications.

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