

# SEX WITHOUT

# THE LITTLE BLUE PILL

**IF ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION  
DRUGS DON'T WORK FOR YOU,  
THESE ALTERNATIVES MIGHT  
GET THE JOB DONE.**

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**F**or 15 years, a “little blue pill” has been nearly synonymous with treatment for erectile dysfunction. This condition, also known as impotence or ED, leaves men unable to achieve or maintain an erection, which can lead to not only problems in their relationships, but also a diminished quality of life.

An estimated 18 to 30 million men in the U.S. are affected by erectile dysfunction. Partially fueled by marketing aimed directly at patients, many of these men will ask for a prescription from their doctor for Viagra—a small, diamond-shaped blue pill—or similar medications like Levitra, Cialis and Stendra.

Because of their effectiveness and ease of use, oral medications for erectile dysfunction have revolutionized the treatment of this condition. In spite of that, around 30 percent of men cannot take these drugs due to other health conditions such as heart problems, uncontrolled high or low blood pressure, or kidney or liver disease.

Fortunately, these men have other options. While none may be as simple and convenient as a little blue pill, the alternatives still offer men with erectile dysfunction a chance at better sex and a more fulfilling life.

## ✦ Penis Injections

When the first line of defense against erectile dysfunction—oral medications—doesn't work, many men can still achieve an erection by injecting a drug called alprostadil into the body of the penis. As with Viagra, this drug works by widening the blood vessels in the penis, which increases blood flow to the spongy tissue of the penis, resulting in an erection in 70 to 90 percent of men. After the drug is injected, an erection will take up to 20 minutes to develop, but can last for up to an hour.

## ✦ Urethral Pellets

For men who are hesitant to inject themselves in the penis, a small pellet of alprostadil can be inserted into the urethra at the tip of the penis. The drug is absorbed through the wall of the urethra, resulting in an erection that begins in 10 minutes and lasts for up to an hour. While this method is less invasive than self-injection, treatment of erectile dysfunction with



urethral pellets only works for 30 percent of men.

## Vacuum Devices

Also known as a vacuum pump, this treatment is 60 to 80 percent effective for erectile dysfunction. To achieve an erection, a man places a plastic cylinder over his penis. An external pump sucks the air out of the tube, which creates a vacuum that draws blood into the penis. A rubber ring placed at the base of the penis keeps the blood in the penis and maintains the erection for up to 30 minutes. Vacuum devices work for most men, although the erection will not be fully rigid. Some men may also find that this method takes away from the “spontaneous” nature of sex.

## Penile Implants


Once the only effective therapy for erectile dysfunction, penile implants are now usually the last option used for treatment. To allow a man to achieve enough of an erection to have sex, a semirigid or malleable rod, or inflatable tube, is surgically implanted inside the penis. When the rod is used, the penis will always be semi-rigid, even while not having sex. The inflatable implant, however, can be inflated to provide an erection, and deflated when not needed. Both types of

devices change the structure of the penis, so oral drugs or injections for erectile dysfunction will no longer work after an implant.

## Hormone Therapy

Some men with erectile dysfunction have lower levels of hormones, which may decrease a man's sex drive and make it difficult for him to achieve a full erection. Hormone levels can be boosted through the use of injections, gels or skin patches, although this will not always reverse the erectile dysfunction. To be effective, the hormones need to be used continually in order to maintain a steady level in the blood. Testosterone pellets implanted under the skin, however, are now available that can last for up to 6 months.

## Lifestyle Changes

Achieving and maintaining an erection requires a good supply of blood to the penis. Other conditions—such as diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure—can affect the blood vessels or blood flow and increase a man's risk of developing erectile dysfunction. Lifestyle changes aimed at preventing these diseases may improve the quality of erections. This includes exercising more frequently, maintaining an ideal body weight and not smoking. 

# TREAT ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION NATURALLY

➡ If you aren't quite ready to use erectile dysfunction (ED) medications, devices or surgeries, there are other options. Many of the problems that lead to erectile dysfunction can be reduced with simple lifestyle changes. These will also improve your overall health and help you avoid heart disease, obesity and other health conditions.

- **Stop smoking.** Nicotine in cigarettes reduces blood flow to your penis, which can interfere with erections.
- **Cut back on alcohol.** As a depressant, too much alcohol can interfere with sexual functioning.
- **Exercise more.** Staying active strengthens your heart and improves blood flow to your genitals. Aim for at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity physical activity.
- **Check your meds.** ED is an unfortunate side effect of many drugs. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if your meds could be a problem and if there are other options.
- **Eat better.** A diet high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and low in saturated and trans fats, reduces your risk of heart disease, and keeps your heart and arteries in good shape.
- **Chill out.** Anxiety, stress and depression can interfere with sex drive and potency. Try stress-reducing activities like meditation or yoga. Plus, talk to your partner openly about what's going on. This will ease tension in the relationship related to your ED.