

Erectile Function Treatment Update

Why is this update important?

Erectile dysfunction is common, affecting half of men age 40 to 70. As men become more open to discussing their sexual concerns, sexual medicine physicians use up-to-date research and guidelines to treat them.

However, other groups have appeared, reaching out to patients directly with aggressive advertising promoting unapproved and often unproven treatments with inflated promises. You may have already heard about such things as penile shock wave therapy, penile platelet rich plasma (aka P shot) or stem cell injections. These treatments typically require significant out-of-pocket costs.

What are the currently approved erectile dysfunction (ED) treatments?

- Oral medications (PDE inhibitors, e.g. Viagra, Cialis, Levitra, Stendra)
- Vacuum erection device
- Intraurethral suppository (MUSE)
- Penile injections
- Penile prosthetics (malleable or inflatable implants)

Do any treatments help restore normal erectile function?

The approved treatments above are used as needed for satisfactory erections but don't treat the underlying cause of ED. Our doctors will work to restore health factors that affect hormones and blood flow important for penile health.

Animal research has suggested that low-intensity penile shock wave therapy (SWT) may restore improved blood flow to the penis. Some human studies have shown benefit while others have not. Long-term results and side effects are not well known. This treatment is not currently FDA-approved for ED in the United States.

Penile injections of platelet rich plasma (PRP) or your own stem cells are also offered by some groups. These treatments are experimental with little data. Injecting your own cells is outside FDA approval but you can see important information below regarding national guidelines.

What do national guidelines say?

Separate panels of experts convened by the American Urological Association (AUA) and the Sexual Medicine Society of North America (SMSNA) reviewed available research to create ED treatment guidelines.

AUA ED guidelines released in early 2018 stated that SWT and restorative penile injections "should be considered investigational." The SMSNA position statement published in March 2018 likewise considers restorative treatments "experimental and should be conducted under research protocols."

How do I protect myself?

Before starting any treatments, do your homework and ask appropriate questions. Ask who will be treating you. Your primary care physician and a urologist are best versed to review your concerns and overall health, and to determine appropriate treatment. When seeing a new doctor, ask about his/her training background. Any physician other than your primary care physician, including all urologists, should have specific training in ED. Urologists with additional experience or training in sexual medicine are also available for complex cases.

Ask what technology/machine your doctor will use. For penile SWT, some groups are not using true shockwave machines but rather acoustic vibrators which will not provide the right energy level for treatment.

Find out the cost of treatment. Sexual satisfaction is important to quality of life and insurance covers most doctor visit costs. Coverage of approved treatments varies but your physician should be able to discuss this openly with you. Question any high-cost treatments; you don't want to be surprised with a bill later.

At Tallwood Men's Health, we are dedicated to safely improving men's sexual satisfaction and overall health with a team of urologists across Connecticut. If you have additional questions or concerns, a member of our team would be happy talk with you further. Please call us at 860.678.5700.


**Hartford
HealthCare**
Tallwood Men's Health

