

## **Getting the best from Viagra**

Viagra is a safe and effective treatment for erectile dysfunction (ED). It helps to restore your natural response to sexual excitement, enabling you to get a firm and reliable erection again. Here is some simple advice to help you to get the best results from it.

### **Good sex takes two!**

Although Viagra can help you regain a normal, firm erection, it is important to remember that good sex involves much more than this. You need to feel sexually excited for it to work well, so ensure that both you and your partner are in the right mood for sex. Time, privacy, comfort and a loving relationship are essential. Being tired, anxious or in a hurry will tend to make it less effective or even stop it from working at all.

Good sex usually involves two people. So do remember your partner's emotional needs, as well as their sexual needs. They may be worried about you or your treatment, or they may not be as interested in sex as you thought, particularly if you have been unable to make love together for some time. It is important to talk to your partner about your sexual relationship, rather than just taking Viagra and hoping for the best. If they aren't enjoying it, the chances are you won't either.

### **How does Viagra work?**

Viagra works within the tissues of the penis, enabling blood vessels to dilate more effectively in response to sexual excitement. Viagra is not an aphrodisiac and will not improve sexual endurance or performance. It is not a treatment for premature ejaculation. There is no evidence that it has any beneficial effects on men who do not have erection problems.

Like most drugs, Viagra does not work immediately and, for best results, it is important to allow adequate time for it to work properly. To get the full effect, you should take Viagra on an empty stomach 30–40 minutes before you are likely to make love.

### **How long does it work for?**

Usually, Viagra will start to work about one hour after you have taken it and its effects will then last for about four hours. If you are in a sexually exciting situation during that time, you should be able to get an erection. If you are not sexually excited, it will probably have no effect. You should take Viagra no more than once per day, adjusting the time at which you take it to suit your preferred time for lovemaking. As a guide, though, if you take a tablet at 8.00pm, it will start working around 9.00pm and remain effective until around 1.00am.

### **What will the erection be like?**

Your erection should be similar to those you experienced before you developed impotence. It will not be harder or last longer, but can be just as good as it used to be. The erection should be reliable and not fade during lovemaking, before you

have an orgasm and ejaculate. The erection should go down after orgasm. If you still feel sexually excited during the four-hour window, you may get another erection.

### **Does Viagra have side-effects?**

Viagra is well tolerated by most men. Some men may experience mild dyspepsia (indigestion), facial flushing and headache. Less frequently, some will experience nasal congestion or changes in colour vision (this may be important to men working with colour-coded materials, such as electronics engineers). If you do experience any side-effects, they should pass off within a few hours as the drug is eliminated from your system. If Viagra makes you feel unwell, you should stop taking it and discuss this with your doctor.

There have been some very rare reports of men developing prolonged, painful erections requiring medical attention after using Viagra. If your erection fails to subside after four hours, you should seek urgent medical advice. This condition is known as priapism, needs hospital treatment and you should go to the nearest major hospital emergency department for advice. Delay in seeking such advice may result in permanent damage to the penis.

### **What dose should I take?**

The doctor who has prescribed Viagra for you should advise you about the correct dose. Viagra is available as 25mg, 50mg and 100mg tablets and most men will start on 50mg. The dose can be increased if Viagra is not effective at the starting dose.

There is a lot of psychological pressure on both you and the Viagra tablet to work first time. Don't be too disappointed if the results with your first tablet are less than you'd hoped for. It is worth persevering at each dose and trying at least four times, on separate days, before changing to the next dose. There is no point in increasing the dose above 100mg and doing so may provoke more side-effects.

### **Who shouldn't take Viagra?**

There are some men who should not take Viagra or, at least, should only take it on specialist advice. These include:

- Men who are unfit for sexual activity, as the exertion might be potentially dangerous to them. This would include men with severe heart or respiratory disease, who experience chest pain, breathlessness or exhaustion during sex.
- Men who are taking drugs known to interact with Viagra. These include nitrates, nicorandil and nebivolol, usually used in the management of angina and some other heart and circulatory conditions. You should NEVER take Viagra with these drugs. It is safe to take normal doses of aspirin, paracetamol, and sensible quantities of alcohol with Viagra. If you are prescribed any new drug, you must tell the doctor who prescribes the Viagra for you.

- Men with conditions that might predispose them to have prolonged erection. These include leukaemia, multiple myeloma and sickle cell disease.
- Men with Peyronies disease should only use Viagra on specialist advice. In this condition, you may have noticed a painful lump in the penis or found that the erect penis appears bent.
- Viagra is only suitable for men. There is currently no research evidence on the use or safety of Viagra when taken by women. For the present at least, women should not take Viagra.

### **Will I always need to take Viagra?**

Some men find that they are able to get normal erections again, without treatment, having used treatment for impotence in the past. It is impossible to predict who will recover in this way and there is no good research evidence as to what proportion of men will do so. Men with predominantly psychological causes for impotence are probably more likely to recover normal erections.

Experience shows that some previously impotent men, finding themselves in a sexually exciting situation and not having taken Viagra, do sometimes get erections and can sometimes make love successfully without treatment, either some or all of the time.

### **What should I do if I develop a new medical problem?**

It is vitally important that you tell any doctor, or paramedical personnel, who might attend you that you are taking Viagra.

If you develop any significant new medical problem or are prescribed any new drug, you must tell the doctor who has prescribed Viagra for you as soon as possible.

**DO NOT TAKE ANY VIAGRA TABLETS UNTIL YOUR DOCTOR OR PHARMACIST HAS CONFIRMED THAT IT IS SAFE TO TAKE YOUR NEW MEDICINE WITH VIAGRA.**

If it isn't, there are alternatives to Viagra that may be suitable for you. You should discuss this with your doctor.

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