



## Rock 'n Roll Lifestyle

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### *Erectile dysfunction can be remedied by a healthier lifestyle*

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The same poor health habits that can lead to heart disease, diabetes and cancer also can contribute to erectile dysfunction (ED). Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is essential to having a vibrant sexual health.

If men see their sexual value falling, maybe those personal habits need a closer look. Men with ED should lay off the 'drugs and rock 'n roll' lifestyle to see if their sexual function can return.

### What Causes Erectile Dysfunction?

Parviz Kavoussi, M.D., fellowship trained in male andrology, the science of male infertility and sexual medicine and in private practice in Austin, TX explains, "In most patients, the cause of ED is multifactorial. In 50 to 60 percent of patients with ED, there can be some lifestyle adjustments that lead to the return of healthy sexual function and a satisfactory sexual life."

ED can result from medical, physical or psychological factors. ED may be caused by a combination of factors including medicine, alcohol or recreational drugs. The physical and medical causes of ED include three basic problems:

- The penis is not getting enough blood flow to achieve an erection. Factors that may reduce blood flow to the penis include smoking, diabetes and heart disease.
- A condition called venous leak, which causes a man not to store enough blood in his penis to achieve an erection. This can affect men of all ages.
- The brain and/or spinal cord nerve signals are not able to reach the penis. Certain traumas, diseases and chemotherapy can cause this. Researchers from Copenhagen are reporting that many unhealthy indulgences including overeating lack of physical activity, high alcohol consumption, smoking and use of hard recreational drugs are associated with men and women who lose their sexual function.

Researchers used survey data from 5,552 Danish men and women ages 16 to 97 years old in 2005 to study the connection between lifestyle factors, sexual inactivity and sexual dysfunction. Results indicate that a number of unhealthy habits are associated with a lack of partner-related

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sex by up to 78 percent in those men making those choices and up to 91 percent in women. Interestingly, those who chose the destructive patterns were much less likely to have a sexual partner.

Among the people in the study who did have a sexual partner, the risk of experiencing sexual dysfunction was greater in men who were extremely overweight by 71 percent and more than 80 percent of the men using hard recreational drugs.

Women who used hashish experienced an almost 3 times greater likelihood of anorgasmia, the inability to achieve orgasm, compared to non-users.

Morten Frisch, M.D., Ph.D., D.Sc., Associate Professor of Statens Serum Institute In Amager, Copenhagen hopes that this study's findings will be used in the future when counseling men with unhealthy lifestyles. When men understand that these choices may be effecting their sexual function and satisfaction, hopefully they will be more willing to quit smoking, cut down on alcohol consumption, get going on an exercise program and develop a better diet.

Dr. Kavoussi adds, "Doctors can explain to patients that smoking is giving them a myriad of health problems including heart disease and lung cancer, and they may not want to quit. However, when patients are told smoking is causing ED, they tend to be more motivated to quit smoking."

Irwin Goldstein, Editor-in-Chief of The Journal of Sexual Medicine concludes that there are several causes of sexual dysfunction, including those over which no one has any control. These "out of our control reasons" include post-chemotherapy side effects as well as post-trauma reactions.

Goldstein encourages everyone to realize that lifestyle decisions including hard drug use are merely individual choices. Everyone can modify their lifestyle through diet, exercise and ceasing recreational drug use which may be hampering their sexual function. These choices could ultimately lead to having sexual function and happiness return.

## **Treatment for Erectile Dysfunction**

Dr. Kavoussi's practice includes a three-tiered approach to help patients retrieve erectile function and sexual happiness. The first tier of treatment is addressing the lifestyles of patients.



## **Put Down the Pipe and Can the Powder**

Tobacco has a huge impact on sexual health. "Nicotine also leads to heart disease because it clogs the blood vessels leading to the heart causing difficulties pumping the blood," explains Dr. Kavoussi. The blood vessels leading to the penis are 4 times smaller than those leading to the heart, so they clog more quickly. This can lead to erectile dysfunction."

Recreational drug use, including marijuana, cocaine, LSD and heroin can also create problems with sexual function for men.

## **Get off the Sauce**

Alcoholics can experience ED and an inability to achieve orgasm. "This is due to the numbing quality that alcohol has because it is a depressant," remarks Dr. Kavoussi. "Reasonable amounts of alcohol can allow a man to maintain an erection longer and provide a better sexual experience for both him and his partner."

In regards to alcohol, it's all about the Greek lifestyle motto, "Nothing in Excess."

However, too much alcohol over time, like alcoholics imbibe, can take away their sexual functioning. After detoxification treatments, men who were experiencing sexual dysfunction often have a return of sexual health.

## **Cut out Some Calories and Add Some Exercise**

A recent study reported that morbidly obese men with ED and low testosterone levels had their sexual health return 12 months after bariatric surgery. After restoring their bodies to an appropriate weight, these men's sexual function normalized. Dr. Kavoussi explains, "Excessive body fat can cause a man's testosterone to convert to estrogen, which can lead to inadequate testosterone levels."

A trainer-assisted exercise program can help normalize the testosterone levels in the patients, so Dr. Kavoussi often prescribes this for his for overweight patients.

## **Drugs Available to Help Erectile Dysfunction**

Drugs that are used to address ED include Cialis, Levitra, Staxyn and Viagra. According to Dr. Kavoussi, these drugs work nicely in 70 percent of the population seeking treatment for ED. After lifestyle changes, drug therapy is the second tier used to treat erectile dysfunction.

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Other treatments include vacuum erectile therapy, urethral suppositories and penile implants. Medicare covers penile implants.

### **Sex Therapy**

The final level for treatment of ED is group sex therapy moderated by a psychologist specializing in sexual health. Sexual activity requires a Yin-Yang of the mind and body. Yin-Yang is an ancient Chinese understanding of how two energies interact to cause things to happen. One energy force is just as important as the other.

Unfortunately, emotional, psychological or relationship problems can cause or worsen ED. These include but are not limited to: Stress at work, stress at home, depression, relationship conflicts and anxiety about sexual performance.

### **Contributing Expert**



Parviz Kavoussi, M.D. is an expert in erectile dysfunction, sexual medicine and male infertility. He is in practice with his infertility specialist father and brother where they pride themselves in being a family that helps others start their families.