



Prostate Cancer  
Supportive Care

# Managing the Impact of Prostate Cancer Treatments on Sexual Function & Intimacy

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**Sexual Health Clinician**



# OVERVIEW

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- 1) What is normal male sexual function?
- 2) Erectile dysfunction
- 3) How prostate cancer and treatments can affect your sexual function
- 4) How to manage changes and symptoms
- 5) Therapies and sexual aids for erectile dysfunction
- 6) Communication & Intimacy
- 7) Lifestyle changes
- 8) Where to get further information and support

# MALE SEXUAL FUNCTION

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There are four stages of healthy male sexual function:

1. sexual desire or libido
2. erectile function
3. orgasm and ejaculation
4. resolution and refractory period

# SEXUAL DESIRE/LIBIDO

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- Sexual desire, libido and sex drive are all essentially a man's desire for sex
- There are a number of factors that can affect sexual desire, both physical and emotional

These can include:

Stress

Anxiety or Depression

Relationship Problems

Erectile Dysfunction

Premature Ejaculation

Pain

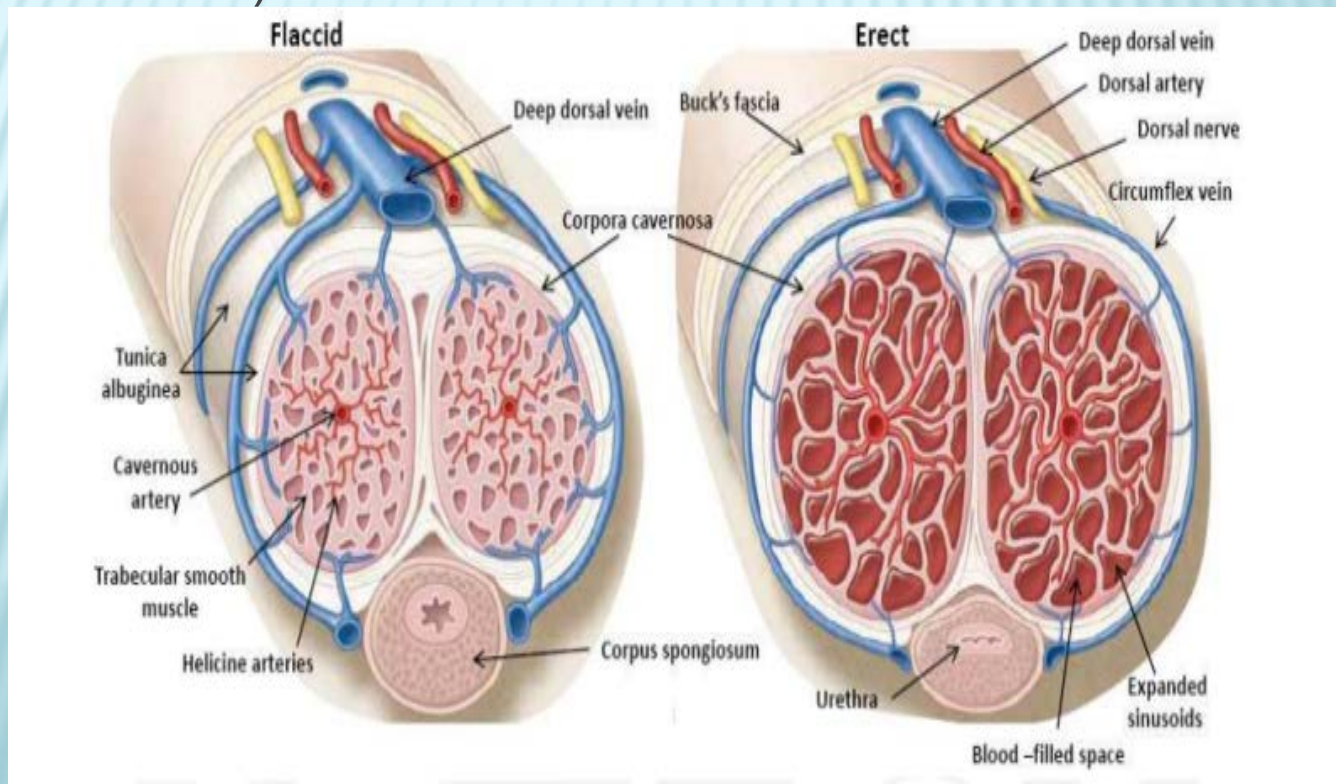
Medication

Testosterone



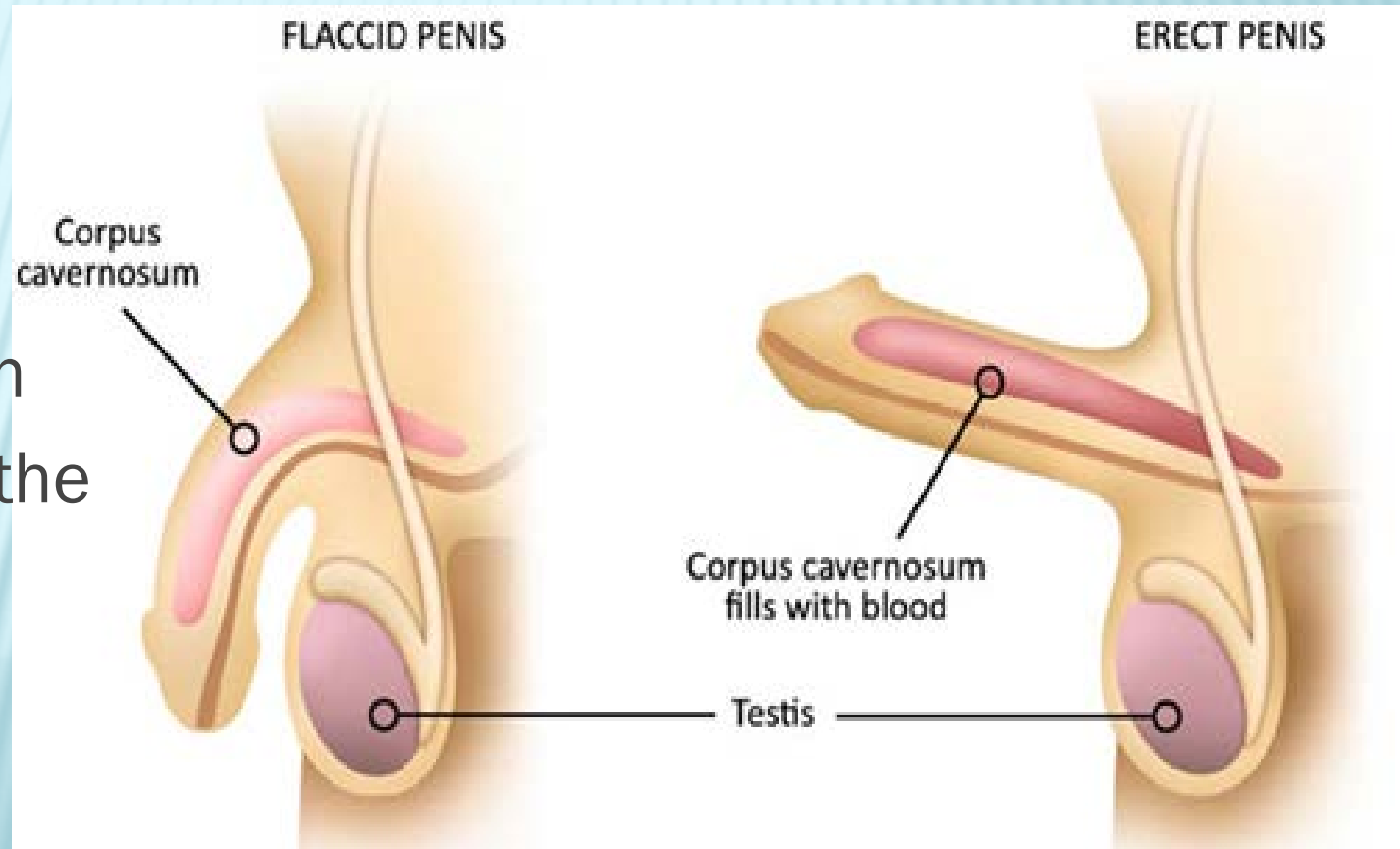
# ERECTION FUNCTION

- There are two tubes of spongy tissue that run along either side of the penis (corpora cavernosa)
- The third tube (corpus spongiosum) runs along the underside of the penis and surrounds the urethra (urine tube)



# ERECTILE FUNCTION

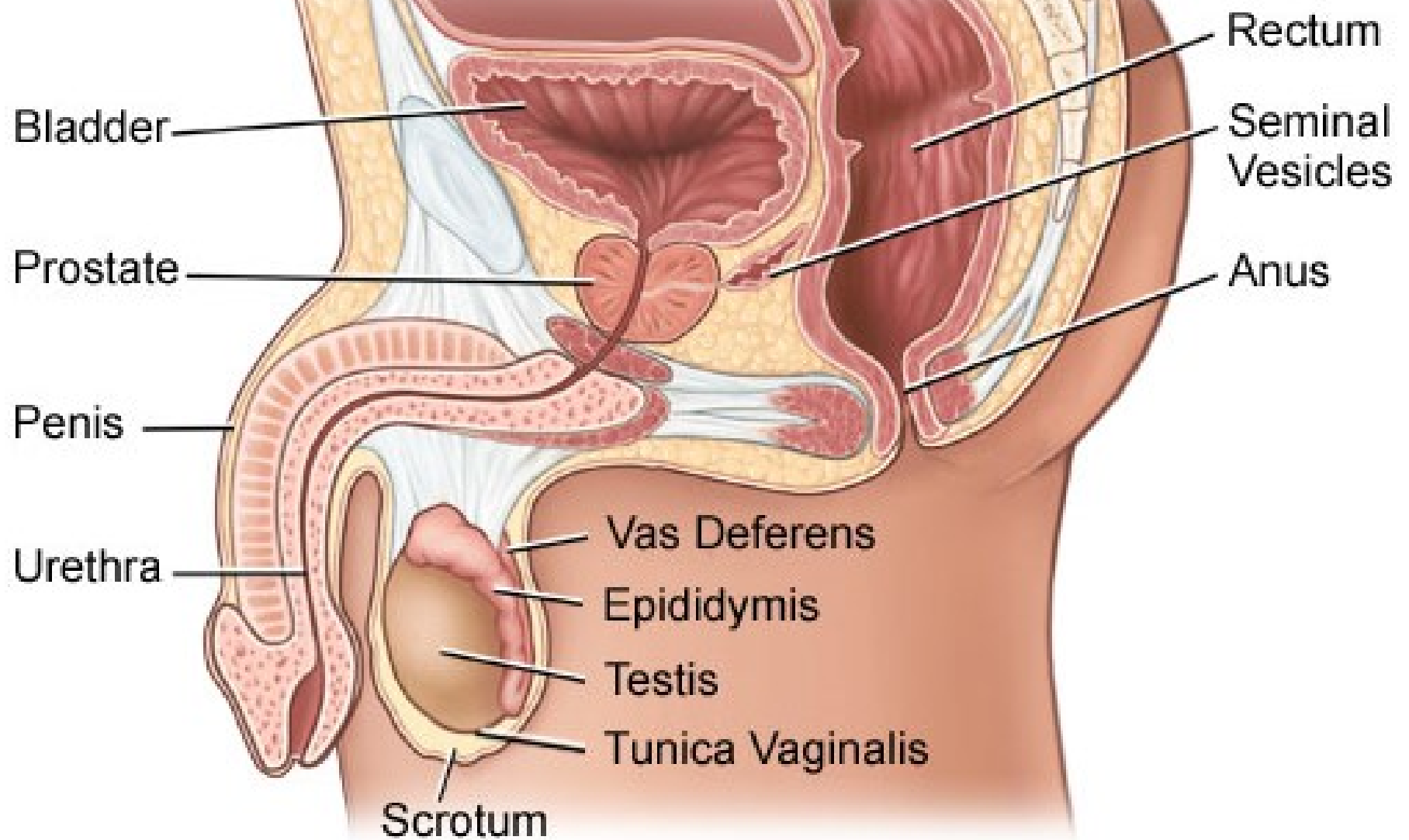
- The brain sends messages down the spinal cord and through nerves located near the prostate to tell the blood vessels to let more blood into the spongy tubes
- The veno-occlusive mechanism maintains the erection



# ORGASM AND EJACULATION

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- After continued sexual stimulation, men usually experience orgasm
- Sexual pleasure peaks, accompanied by rhythmic pelvic muscle contractions followed by ejaculation of semen
- Semen is then pushed through the urethra and out of the end of the penis
- The muscle or valve at the opening of the bladder closes during ejaculation to stop the backflow of semen into the bladder
- This valve also stops urine and semen passing down the urethra at the same time.





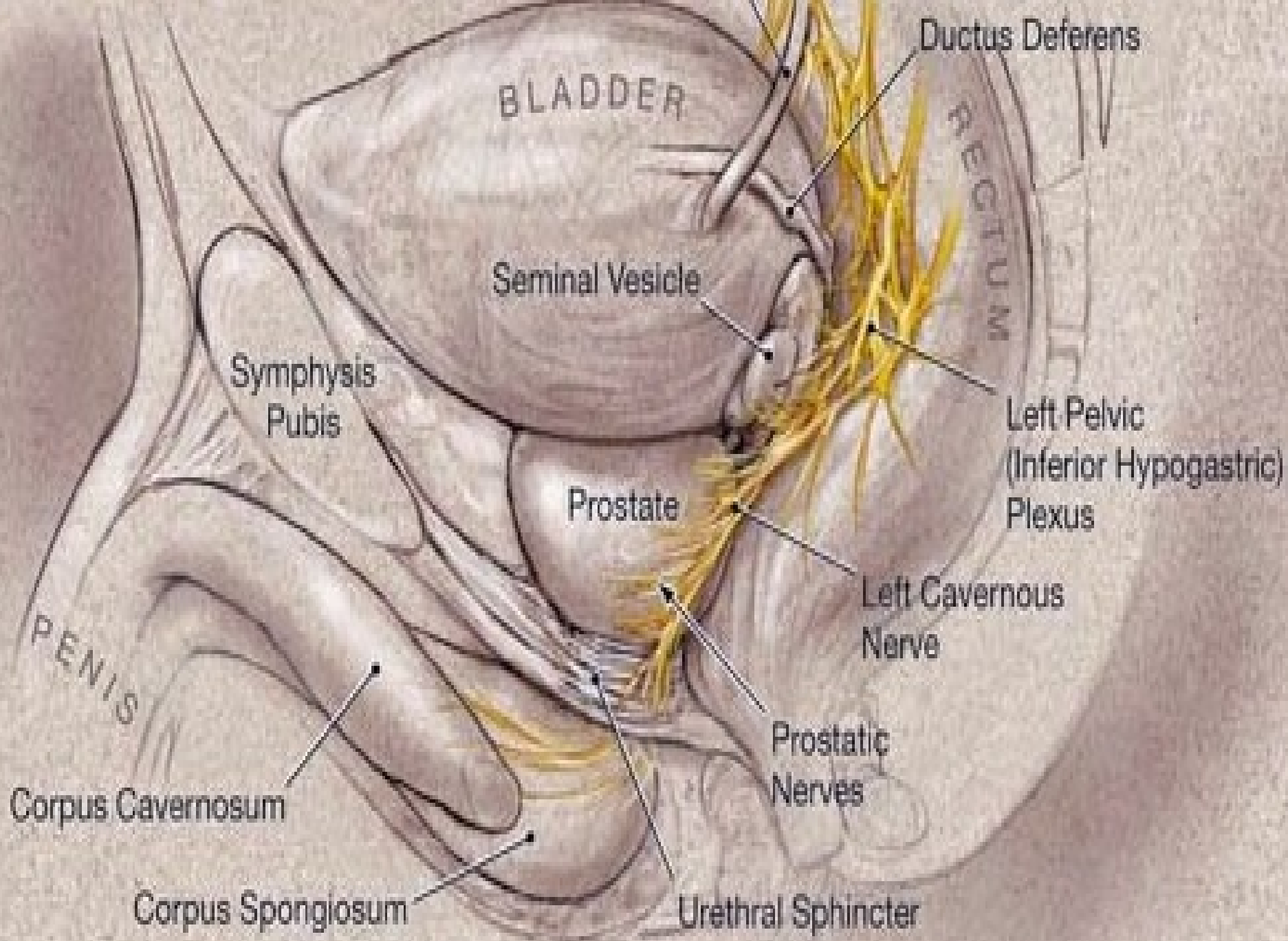
# RESOLUTION AND REFRACTORY PERIOD

- After orgasm and ejaculation the erection subsides
- The man then enters a recovery period, during which another erection or orgasm is not possible for a period of time
- This resting time becomes longer with age
- A young man may be able to regain an erection within several minutes whereas for an older man this time period may range from hours to days.

# ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

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- While your prostate doesn't directly contribute to your ability to have an erection, it is surrounded by the bundles of nerves and blood vessels that are important for erections
- Erectile dysfunction (ED) is relatively common



# **ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION CAN BE ASSOCIATED WITH:**

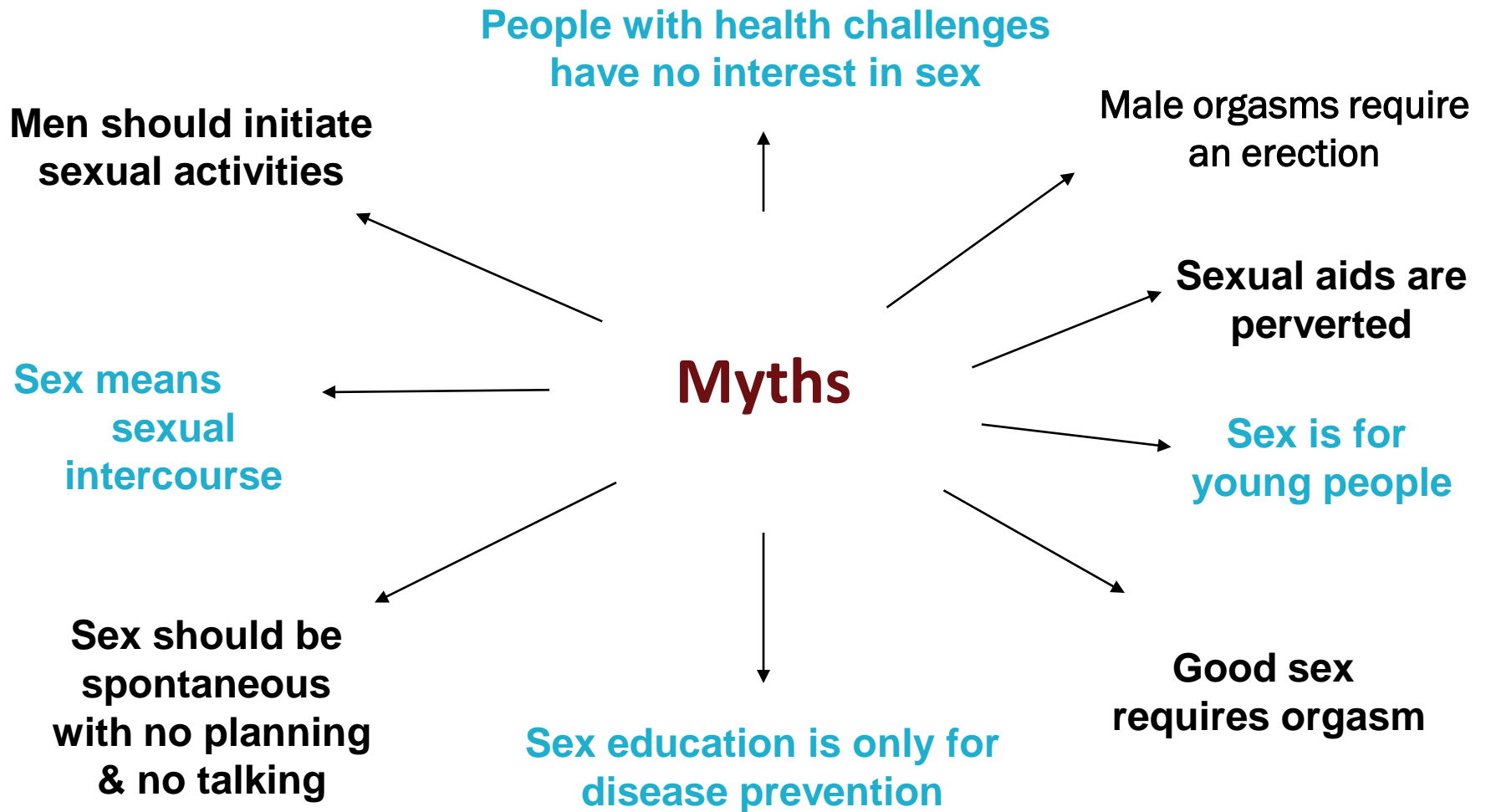
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- Medications
- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure
- Lifestyle factors – smoking, excessive alcohol, obesity, or limited exercise
- Psychological or emotional issues – stress, anxiety or depression.






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***“You can have a  
good sex life after  
prostate cancer treatment”***



# SEXUAL ADAPTATION

- The process of sexual adaptation following prostate cancer treatment is complex and warrants the need to apply the principles of acceptance, flexibility, patience and persistence
- The process includes grieving loss and moving forward with new ways of being sexual along with redefining one's sexual self-view and corresponding sexual values
- Includes sexual and penile rehabilitation, which is a philosophy of care applying restorative and rehabilitation principles **to adapt to limitations and maximize potential while remaining open minded to possibilities**

	Onset	Sexual Drive	Erectile Dysfunction	Orgasm	Ejaculation	Penile Atrophy	Urinary Issues	Bowel Issues	Other Common Changes
Active Surveillance	n/a	 if anxiety present	Potential if anxiety present	Potential changes if anxiety present	n/a	n/a	possible	n/a	n/a
Prostatectomy	Immediate	rarely 	Immediate	40/40/20  may initially feel a burning or pain the first few orgasms	None “dry orgasm”	Possible	Possible leaking urine and/or climacturia, difficulty urinating is rare	n/a	n/a
Radiation Therapy (Brachytherapy & EBRT)	Delayed	Not directly affected	Delayed (6 mo. +)	With brachytherapy may have pain short-term	Decreased, dry and/or blood tinged	Possible	increased urinary frequency, difficulty urinating (retention), blood in urine for first few weeks with brachytherapy, burning with urination	Diarrhea, increased frequency and/or urgency, abdominal pain, bleeding (rare), inflammation of rectum and anus (proctitis)	Possible radiation burns, skin irritation
Androgen Deprivation Therapy	Delayed		Delayed	Decreased intensity	Changes	More common	n/a	n/a	Weight gain, breast swelling, fatigue



# NERVE-SPARING SURGERY



- The nerves are a spray
- Best nerve sparing technique cannot guarantee their preservation
- Damaged by stretch, heat from electrocautery, cutting, damaged blood supply, inadvertent removal of accessory pudendal artery, wound healing
- Nerve recovery can take up to FOUR years. Your body has the final say

# FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RECOVERY OF ERECTIONS

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- Age
- Existing disease processes
- Medications
- Smoking
- Pre-treatment sexual function
- Maintenance of corpora cavernosa (erectile tubes)
- Preservation and recovery of neurovascular bundles and blood vessels

# HOW TO BEGIN

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- Talk to yourself and your partner!
  - Discuss other ways you can enjoy sex without penetration... there are many! (erections are not needed to achieve orgasm!)
  - Let them know what feels good for you and ask them what feels good for them
- See us (PCSC sexual health clinician) in a 1:1 clinic session to individualize a care plan for you and attend our Couples Intimacy Workshop
- Talk to someone! Counselors and/or sex therapists can be very helpful in working out emotions through this process which assists in positive adaptation.
  - [www.counsellingbc.com](http://www.counsellingbc.com) is a helpful website to find a counselor in your area. You can also specify your counselor by entering their specialty (for example: Sexuality)



# MANAGING CLIMACTURIA OR URINE LEAKAGE

- Avoid fluids that are irritating to the bladder (caffeine, alcohol, carbonated beverages)
- Perform Kegel exercises regularly
- Empty the bladder prior and after being sexual
- Avoid pressure on the bladder
- Use a tension ring, adjustable penile constriction loop or condom
- Be sexual in an environment where it is okay to have some urine leakage, such as a shower
- Protect the sexual play area
- Have a scented cloth available



# FACILITATING ORGASMS

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- Change breathing patterns: experiment with the depth and the frequency of breath. Sometimes hastened breath can bring about orgasm sooner whereas slow deep breath can prolong the actual orgasm
- Perform Kegel exercises to help strengthen the pelvic floor,
- Adjust the sexual stimulation by starting and stopping the stimulation allowing for build up of sexual tension before allowing the orgasmic release,
- Introduce different types of stimulation: vibrators may help to stimulate the nerves responsible for orgasm and also may stimulate the cavernous nerves responsible for erections, and/or
- Change the style of lovemaking: introduce more psychologically (versus genitally) based arousal techniques into the sexual profile (example Tantric Sex).

# TIPS FOR SEXUAL AROUSAL

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- Set up a dedicated time to be sexual
- Enhance your environment
- Use the process of “Simmering”
- Practice Mindfulness: Stay “present” when being sexual. Distractions can take away from the engagement in the sexual activities therefore interfere with the sexual response cycle.
- Don’t be a “Spectator”

# MANAGING FATIGUE, WEIGHT GAIN AND HOT FLASHES

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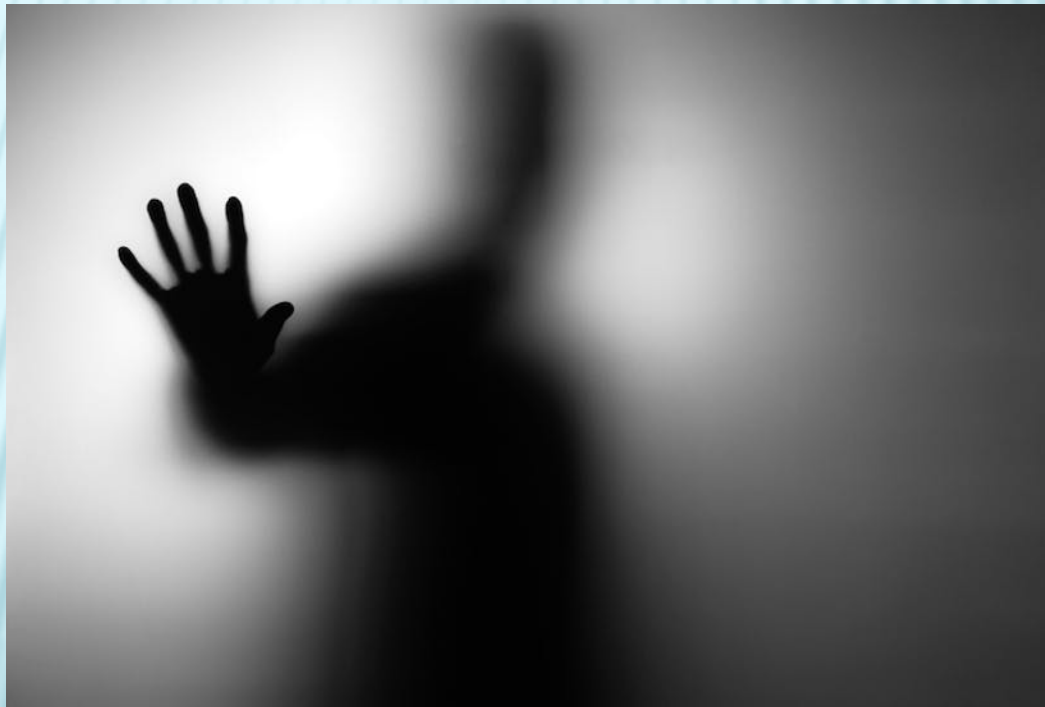
- Journal your energy cycles
- Exercise
- Review dietary intake
- Identify triggers for hot flashes
- Acupuncture/Medication (Gabapentin, Lyrica)



# MARTIN'S STORY

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➤ <https://youtu.be/AV0yZliWTng>





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# **Therapies and Sexual Aids for Erectile Dysfunction**

# PENILE REHABILITATION

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- What is it?
- How long does penile rehabilitation go on for?
- How often is it done?
- Be proactive...develop a plan
- This can be done with:
  - manual stimulation (penile massage),
  - erection enhancing medications and/or
  - with the use of the vacuum pump erection device.

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# **Medications and Treatments for ED**



# ORAL MEDICATIONS (PDE5 INHIBITORS)

## Short-Acting

(4-10 hours)

Viagra

(Sildenafil)



Levitra (Vardenafil)



Staxyn (Vardenafil)



## Long-Acting

(36 hours)

Cialis (Tadalafil)



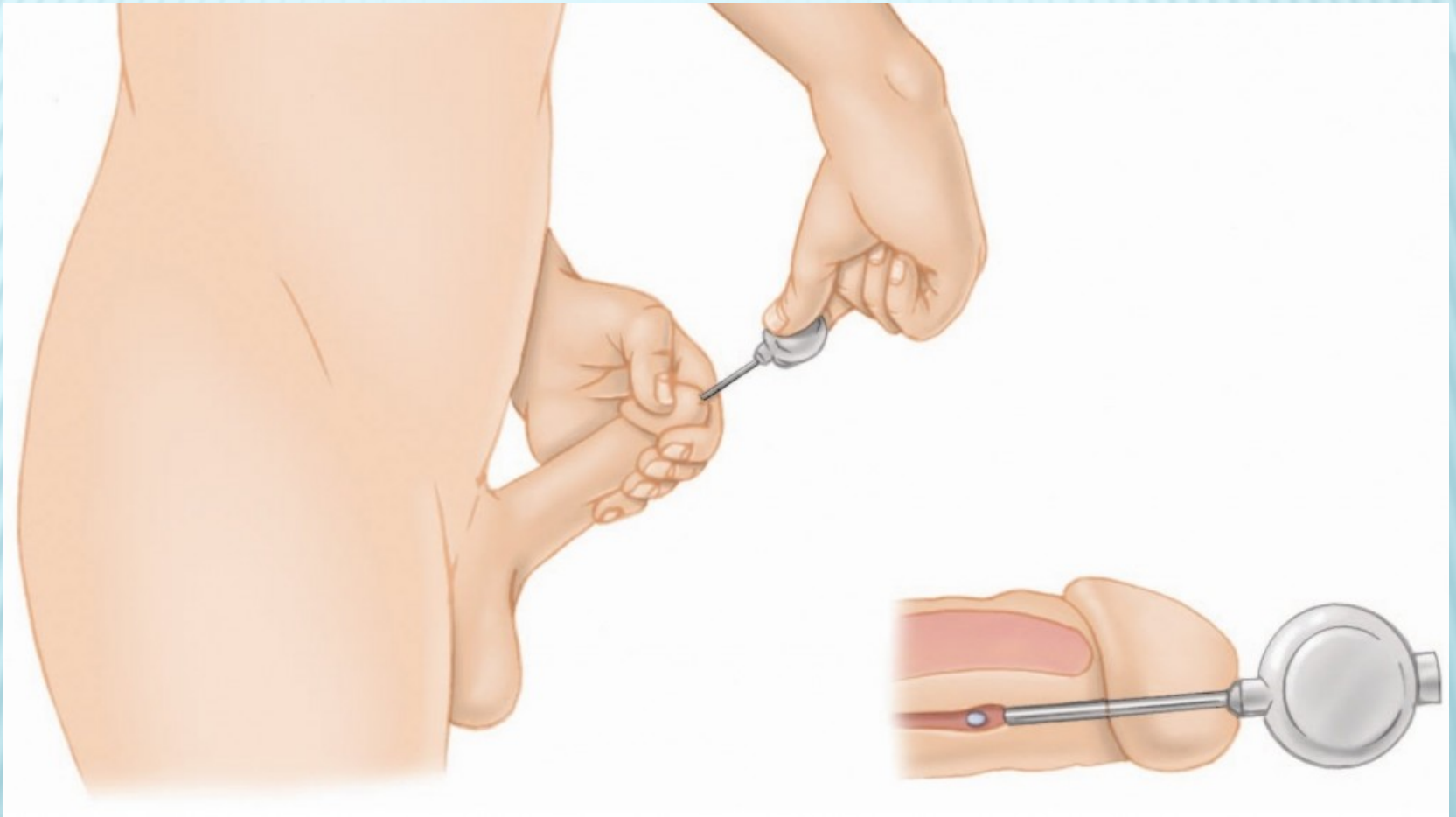
Daily Therapy for  
Penile  
Rehabilitation  
and/or Erectile  
Therapy

Cialis (Tadalafil)  
daily low dose

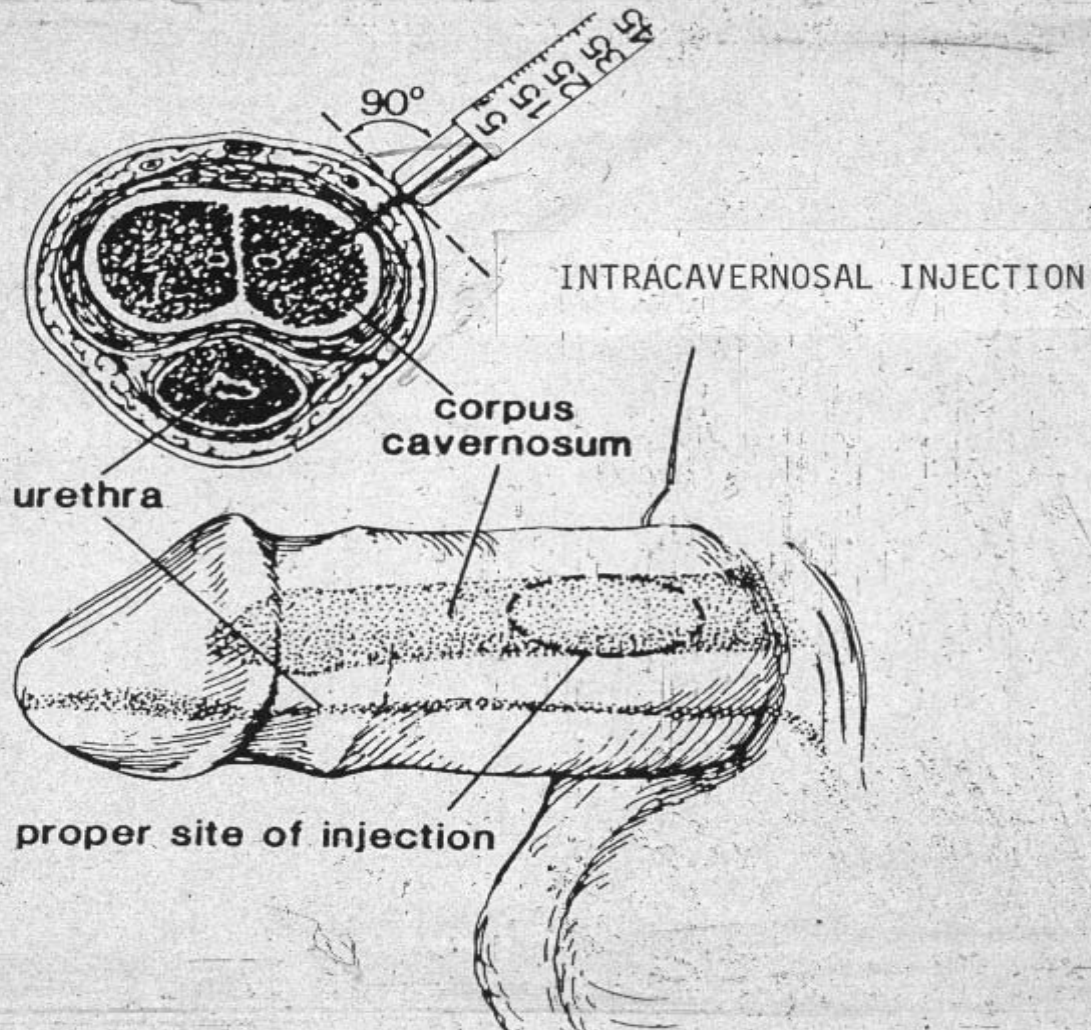




# MUSE® (ALPROSTADIL)



# INTRACAVERNOSAL (PENILE) INJECTIONS (SELF-INJECTIONS)





# VACCUM PUMP ERECTION DEVICE (VED)

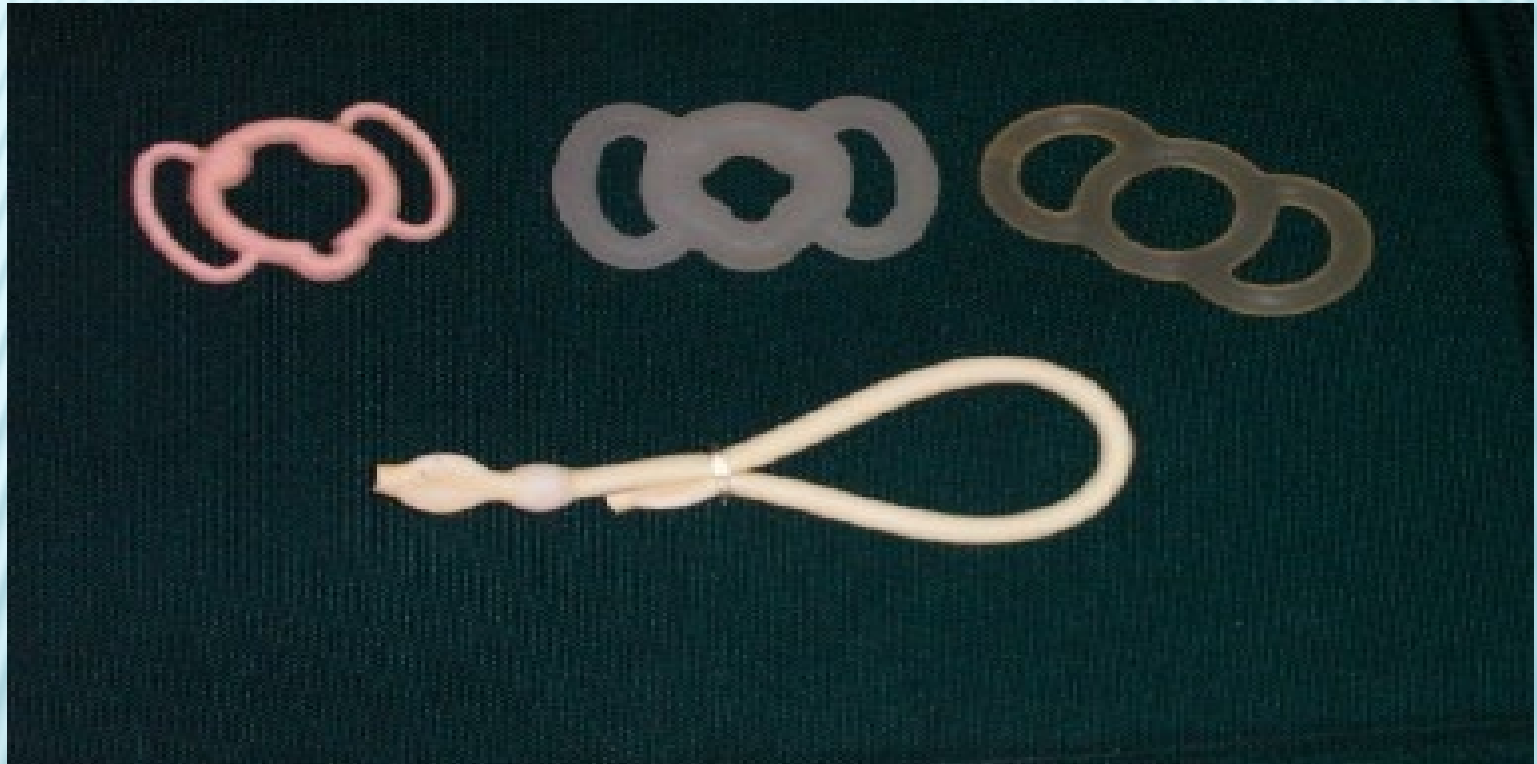


# VACUUM PUMP ERECTILE DEVICE (VED)

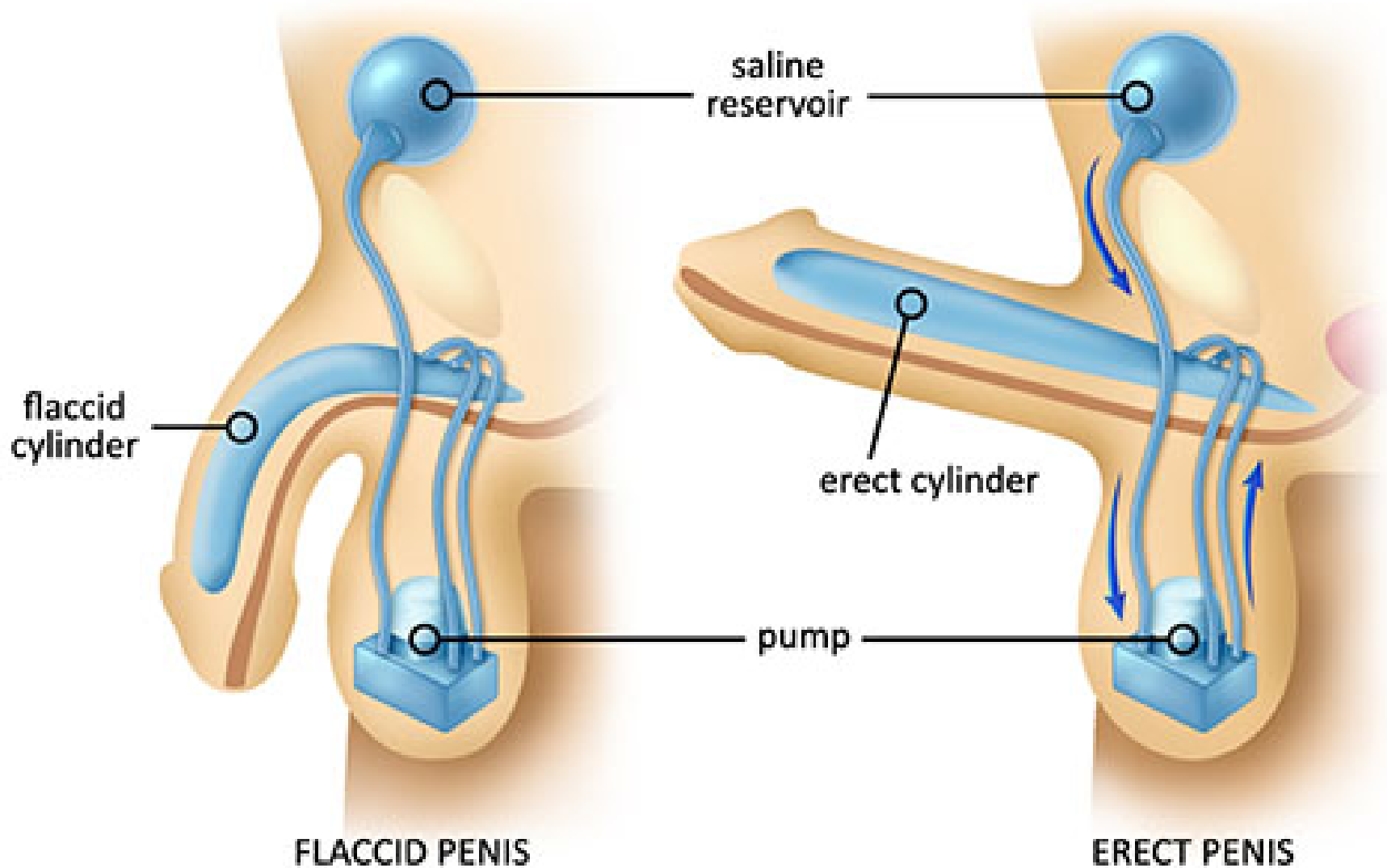




# CONSTRICTION/TENSION BANDS



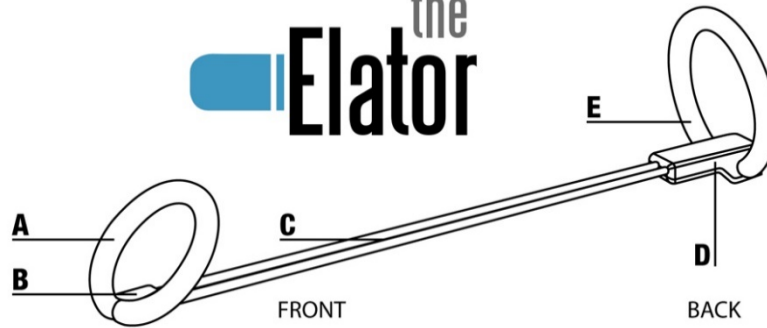
# PENILE IMPLANTS



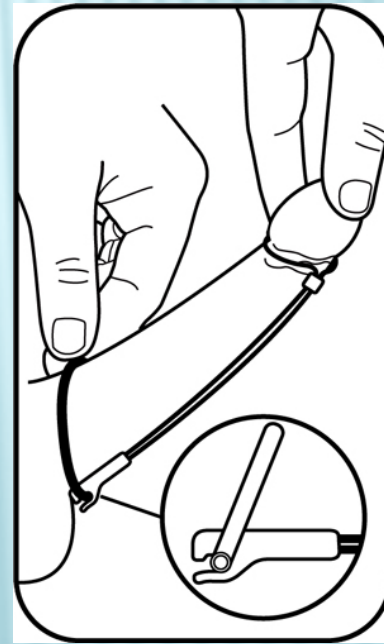
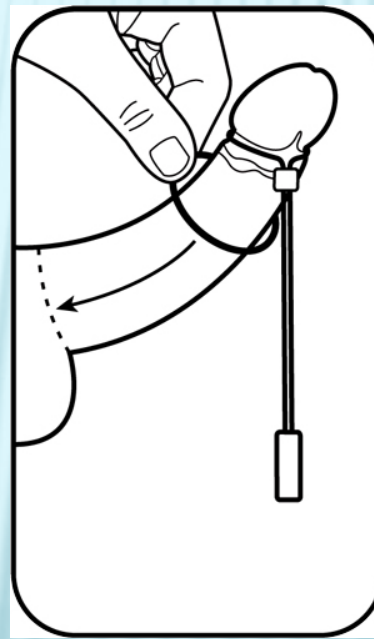
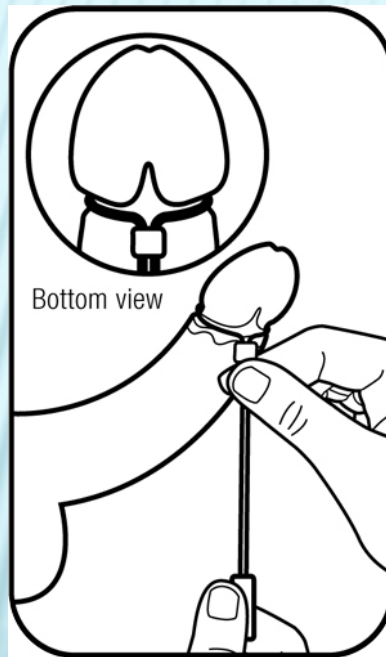
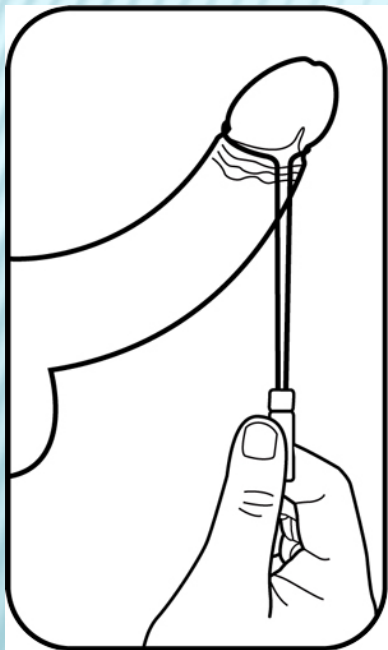
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# **Sexual Aids and Devices**

 **the  
Elator**



[www.elator.com](http://www.elator.com)





# PROSTHETIC PENIS (DILDO) WITH HARNESS





The Lube- helps put on the Grip harness. Also is a great personal lubricant.

## Instruction Guide

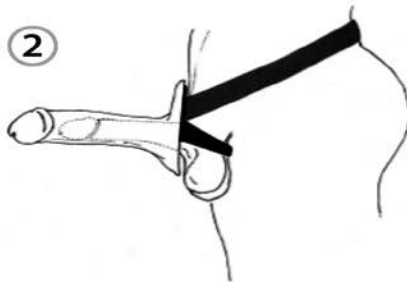
[www.rxsleeve.com](http://www.rxsleeve.com)

1



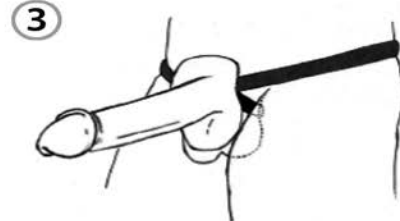
Pour "The Lube" into the palm of your hand or directly onto your genitals

2



Stretch the loop and carefully slide testicles into the hole. Next, slide your penis into the shaft hole

3



Adjust the position for comfort and enjoy

# VIBRATORS





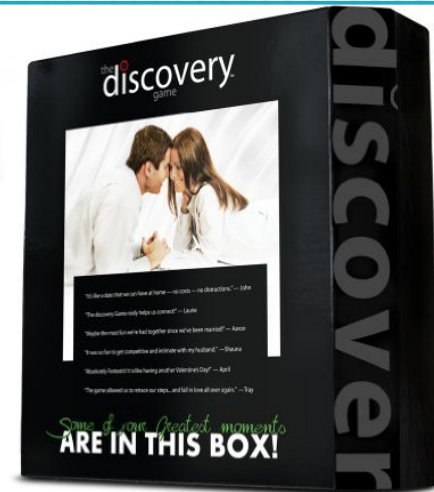
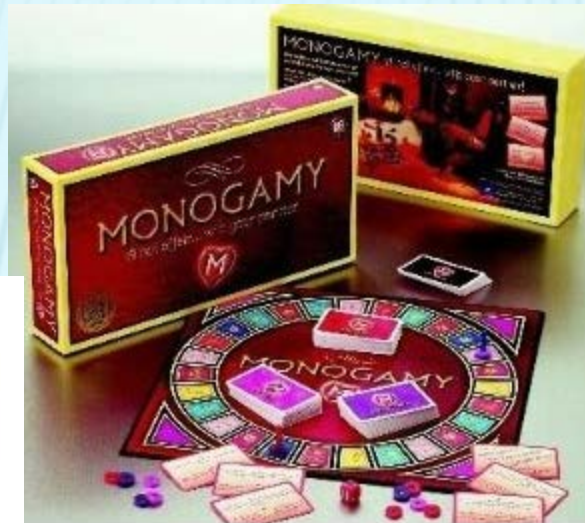
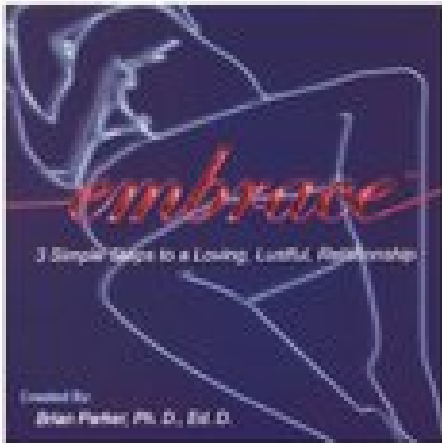
# LUBRICANTS AND VAGINAL MOISTURIZERS



Gynatrof 

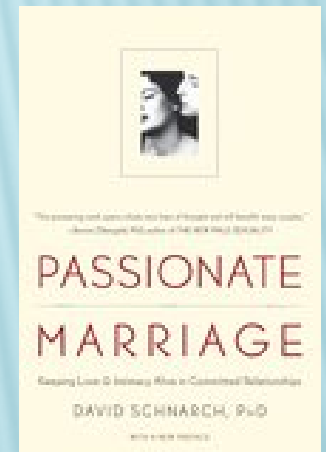
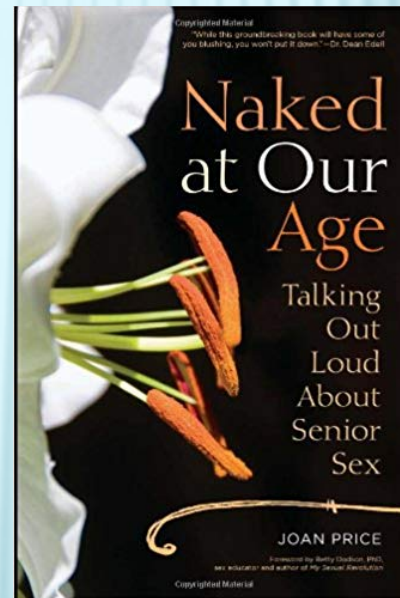
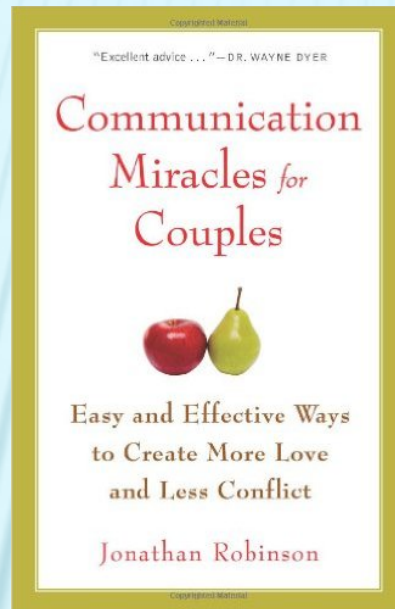
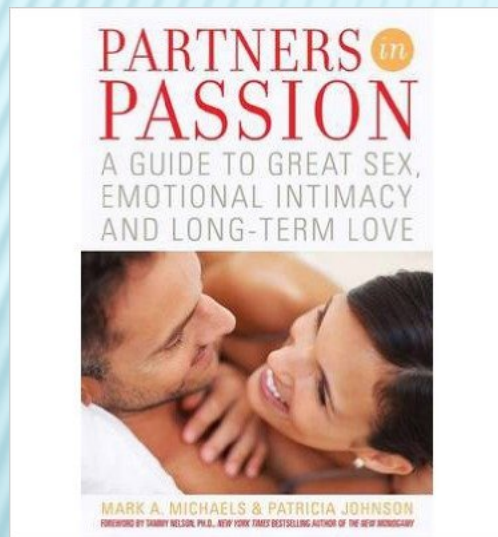


# GAMES





# BOOKS, EROTICA AND MUSIC



# INCORPORATING SEXUAL AIDS AND THERAPIES IN YOUR LIFE

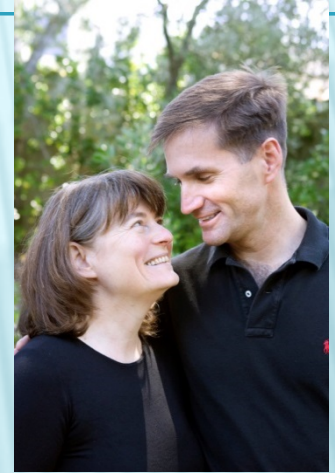
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- Remember that nothing is a quick fix!
- If partnered, involve your partner when choosing an item
- Take some time to get comfortable on your own
- Plan it!
- Change it up!
- Make it fun!



# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Choose toys, games, props together
- Toys made of silicone, glass or metal are not as porous and therefore will not harbour bacteria as easily as latex products
- Most toys can be cleaned with warm soapy water...read the instructions
- Devices should be cleaned before putting them in different orifices
- Removing the batteries can help save energy and eliminate the chance of the device turning on accidentally





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# **Communication & Intimacy**

# Being Single

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- All the treatments are available to you whether you want to be able to masturbate, have sex, or want to start a new relationship.
- Take time to understand and come to terms with the sexual consequences of the treatment(s).
- Think about how you may share your cancer experience with a new partner. (Practice, timing, honesty, keeping it simple)
- Remember you are the best gift you can give someone!

# RELATIONSHIPS

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- Are individual and private and continue to evolve
- Important both partners are open with each other on how the cancer experience has affected each person and the relationship.
- Sexual activity may or may not be important.
- Having an erection is still very important for many men.
- Acknowledge whichever prostate cancer treatment option you choose, there will be side effects impacting your sexual function and sex life



# RELATIONSHIPS

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- If you want to remain sexual, there are treatments and options available!
- It may take some time and experimenting to find what you prefer and what works for you
- It can be helpful to acknowledge all of the dimensions of intimacy (emotional, relational and sexual)
- There are many ways to be sexual (beyond penetrative sexual activity)



# COMMUNICATION

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## *Why talk?*

- If you have a partner, talking about sex, your thoughts and feelings will help you both deal with any changes. Try not to guess how your partner feels about things – guesses can often be wrong.
- It is not always easy to talk about sex and relationships, even if you have been together for a long time. But communication can bring you even closer together and make you feel more confident about facing changes and challenges.

# COMMUNICATION

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- Think about what you want from your sex life and relationship. Ask your partner to do the same.
- Discuss both your thoughts and work out how you can make this happen or areas where you might be able to compromise.
- If you don't feel comfortable talking about sex and your relationship, you could both write down your thoughts and ideas in letters to each other.
- You could also suggest that you see a relationship counsellor together. A sex therapist can also help you find ways to talk about sex.

# TALKING ABOUT SEX WITH YOUR PARTNER

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- Practice saying “those words”
- Make sure to express your needs from a personal perspective - this will help put your partner at ease
- Be clear, honest and open about your desires, your likes and dislikes
- Pay attention to your partner’s responses, and take your partner’s feelings into consideration
- Clarify understanding...paraphrase what you thought you heard
- Ask questions
- Acknowledge your partners views matter to you ([SexualityandU.ca](http://SexualityandU.ca))



# ENHANCING INTIMACY

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- ▶ Give yourself permission
- ▶ Remain positive and open minded
- ▶ Take the time...make dedicated time
- ▶ Maximize potential
- ▶ Adapt to limitations
- ▶ Reduction of goal oriented sex/intimacy
- ▶ Pleasure focused (intercourse/outercourse)
- ▶ Use all your senses
- ▶ Sexual environment
- ▶ Learn about each other's sexuality
- ▶ Remember the brain is the biggest sexual organ
- ▶ Have fun!



# LIFESTYLE

## ➤ Quit smoking

- smoking has a harmful effect on blood circulation; good erectile function requires good circulation

## ➤ Eat a healthy, balanced diet

- this can assist in lowering cholesterol; high cholesterol can block arteries and reduce the good circulation and blood flow required to achieve erections (PCSC Dietician available at no expense)

## ➤ Exercise

- regular exercise has many benefits including assisting with maintaining a healthy body weight, prevention of fatigue and assisting in overall wellbeing and mood (PCSC Exercise Physiologist available at no expense)

## ➤ Cut down on alcohol

- long term heavy drinking can affect erections due to damaged nerves, liver damage and hormone imbalances. Plan to drink responsibly (no more than two standard drinks on any day)

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***“This experience  
gave me a license  
to be intimate with myself”***

REMEMBER...ACCEPTANCE, FLEXIBILITY,  
PATIENCE AND PERSISTANCE  
CREATE A SEXUAL LIFE THAT YOU ARE  
COMFORTABLE WITH





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# QUESTIONS?



# CONTACT INFORMATION

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# PROGRAM CONTACT DETAILS

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