

# Male Cardiovascular Health Clinic: Alprostadil patient information

This information sheet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about alprostadil injections to treat your erectile dysfunction. Please ensure that you read the manufacturer's leaflet that accompanies your supply of alprostadil for further details on the treatment. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is alprostadil?

Alprostadil is available as an injection that is effective as a treatment for most men who suffer from erectile dysfunction (ED or impotence). It works by expanding the arteries in the penis, allowing an erection to occur.

**Alprostadil does not change your sex drive and is only recommended for men with erectile dysfunction.**

## How do I use alprostadil?

After you have had a trial dose in the clinic, we will decide a dose for you to use at home. You will be shown how to administer the medicine yourself. Doses usually start from 2.5mcg and can be increased by your doctor or nurse according to your desired effect. **Do not alter the dose without advice from your doctor or nurse.**

Do not use alprostadil more than three times a week, and allow at least 24 hours between injections. Alprostadil must not be taken in conjunction with any other medications for erectile dysfunction.

Following the injection, an erection should occur within 5–20 minutes. The erection should last no longer than one hour.

After use, always dispose of the injection in a sharps bin – your GP will give you a sharps bin to take home with you.

## What are the side effects of using alprostadil?

**Possible side effects include:**

- penile pain
- prolonged erection (priapism) – please seek medical advice immediately if you have an erection lasting longer than four hours.
- bleeding at the injection site.

Further information on side effects can be found in the manufacturer's patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine.

## Things to avoid

- Do not re-use the needles. **They are single use only.**
- Do not increase the dose, particularly if erections are lasting longer than one hour.
- Do not use alprostadil in conjunction with any other therapies or medicines for erectile dysfunction.

## Is there anything else I need to know?

If you are taking **short-acting nitrates** – either as glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray or as tablets under the tongue – you should only use alprostadil after you have talked it through carefully with your doctor or nurse. If you are unsure whether you take nitrates, please ask your doctor or nurse.

## Chest pain following the use of alprostadil

Before prescribing alprostadil, your doctor will have made a thorough assessment to ensure that it is safe for you to take this drug.

**However, in the unlikely event that you experience chest pain after using alprostadil:**

- you must rest
- you can use your GTN spray/tablets.

**If the pain doesn't go away within 10–15 minutes, seek medical advice.**

## Where can I get a repeat prescription?

You can get a repeat prescription from your GP.

### Contact us

If you or your partner has any questions about alprostadil, please do not hesitate to call the cardiac nurse specialist on **020 7188 0727**. Please note that the specialist nurse may not be able to return your call immediately but will aim to do so as soon as possible.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Further information

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'      **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)