

Male Cardiovascular Health Clinic: Sildenafil patient information

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

What is sildenafil?

Sildenafil is an effective treatment for most men who suffer from erectile dysfunction (ED or impotence). It works by allowing the normal process of an erection to occur.

Sildenafil does not change your sex drive and is only recommended for men with erectile dysfunction. Sildenafil will not work without sexual stimulation of some kind.

How do I use sildenafil?

Sildenafil can be taken with or without food, although if you take it with food, it may delay how quickly it works.

You should take sildenafil about one hour before sexual activity. It is effective from 30 minutes to approximately two hours after taking it.

Do not take more than one tablet in any 24 hour period. Do not exceed the dose that your doctor has prescribed for you. Do not drink grapefruit juice when you take sildenafil, as this can affect how well the drug works.

What are the side effects of using sildenafil?

Possible side effects include:

- headache
- flushing
- dizziness
- indigestion
- nasal congestion
- temporary changes in your vision, such as colour tinge, blurred vision or increased perception of light. Please bear this in mind if you are planning on driving. Please contact your doctor immediately and stop taking sildenafil if you experience sudden decrease or loss of vision.

The side effects may reduce over time but please talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about them. Further information on side effects can be found in the manufacturer's patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine.

Things to avoid

Sildenafil must not be taken in combination with **long-acting nitrates**, such as isosorbide mononitrate (sometimes known as Imdur[®], Ismo[®], Elantan[®]) or nicorandil, as this can cause a sudden and dangerous drop in blood pressure.

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 sildenafil after you have talked it through carefully with your doctor or nurse.

Do not take a dose of sildenafil within 12 hours of a dose of GTN. This means that if you need to use your GTN spray, you will have to wait until 12 hours after you have taken sildenafil. If you have chest pain that does not go away with rest, go to hospital and tell them that you have taken sildenafil.

Never take sildenafil with non-prescription drugs, such as amyl nitrate/nitrates (poppers). If you are unsure whether you take nitrates, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Sildenafil may also interact with other medicines, so let your nurse know immediately if there are any changes to the medicines that you take (including those that you buy yourself, or herbal/homeopathic medicines) so that they can make sure that this treatment is still appropriate.

You can continue to eat foods that contain nitrates such as green leafy vegetables and root vegetables.

Chest pain following the use of sildenafil

Before prescribing sildenafil, 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 sildenafil:**

- you must rest
- seek medical advice if the pain doesn't go away within 10–15 minutes.

If you need to seek medical help, you must let the doctors know that you have taken sildenafil, as this will affect the treatment you receive.

You must not use any form of nitrate therapy – including the spray or tablets under the tongue – without 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 sildenafil, 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 soon as possible.

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

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years.

To join:

t: 0848 143 4017 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk

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