

## Patient information

### **Treatment for Erectile Dysfunction**

#### Urology Department

There are three safe and effective tablet treatments available for ED (erectile dysfunction, impotence), Viagra (sildenafil), Levitra (vardenafil) and Cialis (tadalafil). They can help 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.

#### **How do the tablets work?**

All the tablets all work in the same way. They act on the tissues of the penis, causing the erectile tissue within the penis to relax more fully and fill with blood in response to sexual excitement.

They are not aphrodisiacs or a treatment for premature ejaculation. There is no evidence that they have any beneficial effects on men who do not have erection problems. They do not work without sexual stimulation.

#### **How should I take the tablets?**

The tablets do not work immediately. They may start to work after around 15 minutes in some men, but for the most reliable results you should take them about one hour before you wish to obtain an erection.

You can experiment yourself with the best time to take them. If you plan to have food and drink at around the same time, it might take a little longer before it starts to work, so perhaps allow up to two hours after taking them.

For many men the tablets won't work first time. You may need to take up to twelve tablets of different dose before you can tell whether or not it will work for you. This can be disheartening, particularly if you are paying for your tablets privately, but it is often very worthwhile in the end.

#### **Will I have to pay for my tablets?**

The Department of Health states:

"From 1 July 1999 only those patients suffering from one of the specified medical conditions are eligible to receive drug treatments for impotence on the NHS. Other men can receive a private prescription from their own GP."

## **The specified medical conditions are:**

Diabetes; multiple sclerosis; Parkinson's disease; poliomyelitis; prostate cancer; prostatectomy; radical pelvic surgery; renal failure treated by dialysis or transplant; severe pelvic injury; single gene neurological disease; spinal cord injury and spina bifida.

So, unless you have one of the above conditions, you have to pay the full cost of any tablets prescribed to treat ED. This policy may be reviewed by the Department of Health in the future.

If you have one of these conditions you will not have to pay the cost of the tablets but you will have to pay prescription charges if applicable.

## **How long do the tablets work for?**

Duration of effect is the most important difference between the three tablets. All three tablets are highly effective and it is very much a matter of personal preference and experience as to which is going to be the most suitable.

Viagra and Levitra work reliably from about one hour after you have taken them and their effects will then last for at least four hours and up to 12 hours.

You should take Viagra and Levitra no more than once a day, adjusting the time at which you take it. As a guide if you take a tablet at 8.00pm, it will start working around 9.00pm and remain effective until around 1.00am.

Cialis can be given in two different ways. Either on demand and when it will last for up to thirty-six hours( as a guide if you take a tablet at 8.00pm, it will start working around 9.00pm and remain effective until around 9.00am on the second day) or as a daily dose if your doctor feels it is appropriate.

Some men will be happy with the first one they try; others want to try them all in order to find which one suits them best.

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

Your erection should be similar to those you experienced before you developed ED. It will not be harder or last longer.

The erection should be reliable and should go down after orgasm. If you are still feeling sexually excited during the period that your drug remains effective, you may get another erection.

## **Do the tablets have side effects?**

All three tablets are well tolerated by most men. Some men may experience mild dyspepsia (indigestion), facial flushing, headache and nasal congestion with any or all of them.

Some men experience changes in colour vision (this may be important to men working with environments where colour vision is critical, such as pilots or electronics engineers) with Viagra and, more rarely, with Levitra. Some men experience backache or muscular pains with Cialis.

If you do experience any side effects, they should pass off within a few hours, as the drug is eliminated from your system. If your treatment makes you feel unwell, you should stop taking it and discuss this with your doctor.

## **Other safety issues**

**Heart diseases:** It is a myth that all men who have had a heart attack (myocardial infarction, MI, coronary), or who have had heart surgery, or some other types of heart disease cannot have treatment for ED.

Most men with stable, well-controlled heart disease can safely receive treatment with Viagra, Levitra and Cialis, although they must have an individual risk assessment with their physician beforehand. If they are fit enough to cope with the physical and emotional stress associated with sex, without developing chest pain, breathlessness or exhaustion, then treatment is usually straightforward.

Any risk of having further heart attacks is associated with the activity of sex, not with the drugs used to improve erectile function. However, it is important to note that some drugs used to treat heart disease (nitrates and nicorandil) may interact with Viagra, Levitra and Cialis, leading to a sudden and dangerous drop in blood pressure. These drugs must never be used in combination.

**High blood pressure:** Most men with well-controlled hypertension (high blood pressure) can safely receive treatment with Viagra, Levitra and Cialis, although they must have an individual risk assessment with their doctor beforehand. Men taking alpha-blocker drugs for hypertension should not take Viagra, Levitra and Cialis, and it may be necessary to change their blood pressure treatment before they can safely use ED therapies.

**Visual problems:** Viagra and, to a lesser extent, Levitra may cause temporary changes in colour vision. These effects have been carefully studied and are entirely harmless.

There have been reports in the press that the use of Viagra might be associated with blindness, caused by serious condition called non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy (NAION). NAION is the most common acute optic condition causing loss of vision; it is responsible for two to ten new cases of visual loss per year, per 100,000 persons aged 50 and older.

Men who are at increased risk of developing heart disease (such as smokers, and those with high blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol problems) are more likely to develop NAION. They are the same men who are likely to develop ED.

As a consequence, these men are also more likely to take Viagra, Levitra and Cialis. There is no evidence of any causal relationship between the use of these drugs and NAION.

**Alpha-blocker drugs for urinary problems:** Men who take alpha-blocker drugs for urinary problems (prostatism, poor stream) should check with their doctor that it is safe to take ED medication with their current therapy.

**Prolonged erection or priapism:** There have been some extremely rare reports (much less than one in a million) of men developing prolonged, painful erections, requiring medical attention, after using this type of treatment. If your erection fails to subside after four hours, you should seek urgent medical advice.

This condition, known as priapism, needs hospital treatment and you should go to the nearest hospital accident and 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 your treatment for you should advise you about the correct dose. Viagra is available as 25mg, 50mg and 100mg tablets, Levitra as 5mg, 10, mg and 20mg, Cialis as 2.5mg, 5mg, 10mg and 20mg. Your doctor will recommend the starting dose depending upon your individual circumstances.

There is a lot of psychological pressure on you for the 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 the maximum recommended and doing so may provoke more side effects.

### **Who shouldn't take these tablets?**

There are some men who should not take Viagra, Levitra or Cialis 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 or other, similarly demanding activities.
- Men who are taking drugs known to interact with Viagra, Levitra and Cialis. These include nitrates, nicorandil, usually used in the management of angina and some other heart and circulatory conditions, and protease inhibitors, used in the treatment of HIV infection and AIDS.

### **You should never take Viagra, Levitra or Cialis with these drugs.**

- It **is** safe to take normal doses of aspirin, paracetamol, and sensible quantities of alcohol, with them. If you are prescribed **any** new drug, you must tell the doctor who prescribes the new drug and the doctor who prescribes ED treatment for you.
- Men with conditions that might predispose them to have a prolonged erection. These include leukaemia, multiple myeloma and sickle cell disease.
- These tablets are licensed only for use by men. There is limited research evidence to support their use by women. Women should not take them except on specialist advice.
- Men who are taking tablets called alpha-blockers for relief of urinary symptoms may not be able to take these tablets, or may need to start treatment at a lower dose.
- Although the information sheet in each pack of tablets recommends caution, it is safe for most men with Peyronie's disease to use Viagra, Levitra and Cialis. Peyronie's disease is a scarring condition of the penis which causes it to bend. It is important that you inform your doctor if you think you have this condition.

## **Will I always need to take ED treatment?**

Some men find that they are able to get normal erections again, without treatment, having used treatment for ED 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 mainly psychological causes for ED are probably more likely to recover normal erections. Experience shows that some previously affected men, finding themselves in a sexually exciting situation and not having taken their tablets, do sometimes get erections and can sometimes make love successfully without treatment, either some of 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 healthcare professional that might attend to you, that you are taking Viagra, Levitra or Cialis. If you develop any significant new medical problem or are prescribed any new drug, you must tell the doctor who has prescribed your ED treatment for you as soon as possible.

**Do not take any Viagra, Levitra or Cialis tablet until your doctor or pharmacist has confirmed that it is safe to take your new medicine with them.**

## **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## **Further information**

**For general queries about telephone the Urology Centre on Tel: 0151 600 1564.**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 600 1564**

**For clinical questions specific to your case, telephone the secretary of your Urology Consultant**

**Sexual Dysfunction Association  
Windmill Place Business Centre,  
2-4 Windmill Lane,  
Southall, Middlesex, UB2 4NJ  
Helpline: 0870 7743571**

**[www.sda.uk.net](http://www.sda.uk.net)**

**Offers information and support for those who suffer from erectile dysfunction.**

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

يمكن توفير جميع المعلومات المتعلقة بالمرضى الموافق عليهم من قبل ائتمان المستشفى عند الطلب بصيغ أخرى، بما في ذلك لغات أخرى وبطرق تسهل قراءتها وبالحروف الطباعة الكبيرة وبالصوت وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبطريقة مون والكرونيلا.

所有經信托基金批准的患者資訊均可以其它格式提供，包括其它語言、易讀閱讀軟件、大字

體、音頻、盲文、穆恩體 ( Moon ) 盲文和電子格式，敬請索取。

در صورت تمایل می‌توانید کلیه اطلاعات تصویب شده توسط اتحادیه در رابطه با بیماران را به اشکال مختلف در دسترس داشته باشید، از جمله به زبانهای دیگر، به زبان ساده، چاپ درشت، صوت، خط مخصوص کوران، مون و بصورت روی خطی موجود است.

زائباری پیوندیدار بهو نهخوشانهی له لایین تراستهوه پمساند کراون، ننگر داوا بکرنیت له قورماتمکانی تردا بریتی له زمانهکانی تر، نیزی رید (هاسان خویندنهوه)، چاپی گموره، شربتی دهنگ، هیلی موون و نملیکتر و نیکتی همه.

所有经信托基金批准的患者信息均可以其它格式提供，包括其它语言、易读阅读软件、大字体、音频、盲文、穆恩体 ( Moon ) 盲文和电子格式，敬请索取。

Dhammaan warbixinta bukaanleyda ee Ururka ee la oggol yahay waxaa marka la codsado lagu heli karaa nuskhaddo kale, sida luqaddo kale, akhris fudud, far waaweyn, dhegeysi, farta braille ee dadka indhaha la', Moon iyo nidaam eletaroonig ah.