



## TEXAS UROLOGY

### VIAGRA OVERVIEW

In the first eight months after its introduction, over 50 million Viagra tablets have been prescribed. Viagra has been found to be an extremely safe and effective treatment for men who are unable to obtain and/or maintain sufficient erections for sexual intercourse. It is not, however, an aphrodisiac. Viagra will enhance but not initiate erections. Viagra will not help premature ejaculation nor men who are suffering from an inability to orgasm and/or ejaculate.

#### HOW VIAGRA WORKS

The physiologic mechanism of erection of the penis involves release of nitric oxide in the corpus cavernosum (paired chambers in the penis where blood is trapped) during sexual stimulation. Nitric oxide then activates an enzyme which results in increased levels of cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP) producing smooth muscle relaxation of the corpus cavernosum in allowing the inflow of blood. Sildenafil enhances the effect of nitric oxide by inhibiting the enzyme phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5), which is responsible for breaking down cGMP in the corpus cavernosum. When sexual stimulation causes release of nitric oxide, inhibition of PDE 5 by Sildenafil causes increased and prolonged levels of cGMP in the corpus cavernosum. Hence, Sildenafil does not cause an erection, but enhances or potentiates an erection. Sildenafil at recommended doses has no effect in the absence of sexual stimulation.

#### DOSAGE

It is recommended that the initial dose be 50 mg taken at least one half hour to one hour prior to sexual intercourse on an empty stomach. However, it may be taken up to four to six hours prior to intercourse. Once again, its effectiveness is reduced or eliminated with food. Alcohol has no effect on Viagra. Doses greater than 100 mg show minimal further improvement of erections, however, are associated with a significant increase in side effects.

**VIAGRA SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN ALONG WITH NITRATES SINCE THIS CAN CAUSE A SIGNIFICANT DROP IN BLOOD PRESSURE LEADING TO HEART ATTACK AND EVEN DEATH.**

Dosages should be decreased with the medication Cimetidine (Tagamet) and Erythromycin. Additionally, patients over 65, liver impairment, or severe renal kidney impairment should take reduced doses. Suggested starting dose is 25 mg.

#### SIDE EFFECTS

Side effects include and at the following rate:

Headaches – 16%

Flushing – 10%

Dyspepsia (indigestion) – 7%

Nasal congestion – 4%

Abnormal vision – 3% (color tinge to vision and increased light sensitivity or blurred vision)

At 100 mg, indigestion was 17%, abnormal vision 11%

At doses higher than 100 mg, there is a significant increase in side effects.

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## DEATHS

Sexual intercourse is considered an exertional activity, which is associated with a low rate of chest pain and heart attack (approximately 1 per 50,000 intercourses).

As of November 25, 1998, the FDA has cited 130 deaths possibly associated with Viagra out of 50 million tablets that have been prescribed. That is a death rate of approximately .00026%, or 2.6 deaths per million men. Excluding the deaths associated with nitrates or more than 24 hours after taking Viagra leaves only 100 men with no medical treatment for erection problems who have died, or an increase of 2 deaths per million men.

Since Viagra can produce a small decrease in blood pressure, the FDA has recommended that Viagra not be used by men with:

- Unstable angina
- Recent history of heart attack, stroke, or life threatening arrhythmia.
- Significant low blood pressure or uncontrolled high blood pressure (170/110)

With the exception of the above mentioned risk factors, Viagra has been found to be an extremely safe and effective medication with an extremely good safety profile.

## OPTIMAL BENEFIT

Since Viagra's absorption and effectiveness is reduced or eliminated by food, it is suggested that it be taken on an empty stomach (no food for an hour and a half before or after taking the medication). However, Viagra remains effective for at least four to eight hours or longer. Furthermore, it has been found that waiting at least an hour or two before intercourse will produce additional improvement in its effectiveness for some men. Therefore, the best results can be obtained by taking the medication without food at least two hours or longer before possible sexual intercourse. Many men have found that taking the medication prior to going out for an evening or when getting up in the middle of the night to urinate, produces the best results.

Studies have shown that partners obtain as much enjoyment from cuddling, hugging, and intimacy as they do from vaginal sexual intercourse. Men are encouraged to keep this in mind and not either simply watch the time waiting for the onset of the medication, and to remember to cuddle, hold hands, caress, and be romantic.

Frequently associated with erectile dysfunction and an underlying cause of problems with erection are relationship and psychological issues. While Viagra will help produce an erection, it will not alleviate or alter these factors.

## OTHER ISSUES

It is estimated that 50% of men over the age of 40 have some degree of erectile dysfunction. Since erections are blood vessel events, medical problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart disease are frequently underlying causes. Therefore, it is important to be screened for these conditions. Furthermore, if these conditions are not treated there will be progression of erectile dysfunction and the potential is there for Viagra to no longer be effective.

**For men in which Viagra is not successful, there are additional treatment alternatives.**

## **NITRATES TO AVOID WITH VIAGRA**

ISOSORBIDE DINITRATE

IDORODIL

SORBITRATE

MENOKET

ISMO

IMDUR

AMYL NITRITE

NITROSTAT

NITROGLYCERIN

NITROLINGUAL

NITROGARD

TRIDIL

NITRO-BID IV

MINITRAN

NITRO-DUR

TRANSDERM-NITRO

DEPONIT

NITRONG

NITRO-BID PLATEAU CAPS

NITROCINE TIMECAPS

NITORGLYN

NITRO-DERM

NITROL