Debunking the myths about male enhancement drugs: NetWellness

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If you believe the advertisements, men who experience problems in the bedroom can pop a pill once a day and instantly enjoy more passionate, longer-lasting, satisfying sexual experiences that leave them feeling confident about their manliness.

Naturally, men of all ages are lining up to try the latest miracle drug.

But health care professionals caution men to think about what marketers fail to tell you. These "miracle" enhancement drugs can lead to physically and emotionally painful side effects, including ED.

We've entered an era where talking about sex isn't taboo. People aren't afraid to discuss ways to improve their sexual function, and companies are flooding the market with over-the-counter drugs they claim will solve a couple's problems in the bedroom and make men the tigers their wives supposedly want them to be.
Erectile dysfunction, also known as impotence, is a condition in which a man is consistently unable to get or maintain an erection sufficient enough to have sexual intercourse. The condition is more common among older men, and certain medical conditions, like high blood pressure or diabetes, can increase a man's risk.

Things you should know

There are several things every man should understand about male enhancement drugs before popping a pill in the hopes of revving up his sex life:

- Most men have problems with sexual satisfaction, not a medical dysfunction.
- Most men have complaints related to sexual satisfaction (a desire for longer-lasting erections or more stamina, for example) versus a physical dysfunction like premature ejaculation or the inability to get an erection and maintain it for his partner's sexual pleasure.
- Naturally, these issues can lead to sexual misunderstandings and stress between couples, but you have to identify the problem before you can fix it, and pills will not solve this problem. Understanding how your sexual brain works usually will.
- In most cases, the problem is the man's lack of understanding about overall sexuality and how to interpret his partner's body signals.

Most people choose to address the problem with a quick fix, like an over-the-counter drug, because talking to a doctor or their partner about it is too embarrassing.

- Over-the-counter male enhancement drugs are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration.
- The FDA does not regulate over-the-counter male enhancement drugs and supplements, so the exact pharmacological makeup is unclear, and disclosure of potential side effects is not regularly enforced.
- To prove a drug works, the bias has to be removed by means of a double-blind study that tests for safety, effectiveness and potential drug interactions. As far as our experts know, none of the over-the-counter male enhancement drugs have gone through any such scrutiny.
- It is unclear which supplements are safe and which are not.
- Doctors don't know the exact contents and dosages contained in over-the-counter male enhancement drugs, so there is a real risk for dangerous drug interactions that could affect your long-term health.

For example, some supplements contain yohimbine, an alkaloid obtained from the bark of a West African tree, which increases blood flow. The effect, however, is not isolated to the genitals. It happens throughout the entire body, which can cause serious stress to the heart in men with
heart or vascular conditions.

Other supplements contain hormones like testosterone that can contribute to other health complications, such as enlargement of the prostate gland or an increased incidence of prostate cancer.

**Talk with your doctor**

Erectile dysfunction can be treated when the underlying cause for the problem is diagnosed by your urologist, and almost everyone will have some form of sexual dysfunction as they age, whether it manifests as a decrease in arousal, ability to maintain an erection or ejaculation timing. But problems with sexual function don't necessarily mean disease.

Misuse or abuse of male enhancement drugs that contain herbal substances can cause serious side effects. The most serious side effect is priapism, a persistent, painful erection that lasts for hours. Priapism, which can occur without sexual stimulation, requires surgical intervention and can eventually lead to erectile dysfunction.

Prescription drugs like Viagra, which are carefully regulated by the FDA, can be effective for men with diagnosed erectile dysfunction, but they should only be used under the advice and supervision of a physician.

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