

About Sildenafil (Viagra)

Sildenafil is a medicine used to treat erection problems ([erectile dysfunction](#)).

Sildenafil is also sometimes used to treat [pulmonary hypertension](#) (high blood pressure in the blood vessels that supply the lungs).

If you have erection problems sildenafil works by temporarily increasing blood flow to your penis when you get sexually excited.

In pulmonary hypertension it works by relaxing blood vessels in the chest.

If you buy sildenafil for erectile dysfunction, it can also be known by the brand names Viagra, Aronix, Liberize and Nipatra.

Sildenafil for pulmonary hypertension can also be known by the brand names Revatio and Grandipam.

This medicine is available on prescription and you can also buy it from most pharmacies. It comes as standard tablets, chewable tablets, and as a liquid that you swallow.

Key facts

- It usually takes 30 to 60 minutes for sildenafil to work for erectile dysfunction. You can take it up to 4 hours before you want to have sex.
- Taking sildenafil alone will not cause an erection. You need to be sexually excited for it to work.
- The most common side effects are headaches, feeling sick, indigestion and dizziness. Many people have no side effects or only mild ones.
- It can be dangerous to take sildenafil if you also take medicines called nitrates (often given for chest pain). The combination can cause a dangerous fall in your blood pressure. If you're not sure if you're taking a nitrate, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- Do not drink grapefruit juice if you're taking sildenafil (Revatio) for pulmonary hypertension. It affects the way the medicine works.

Who can and cannot take sildenafil

Who can take sildenafil

Most men aged 18 and over can take sildenafil for erectile dysfunction.

Most adults and children aged 1 year and over can take sildenafil for pulmonary hypertension.

Who may not be able to take sildenafil

Sildenafil is not suitable for some people. To make sure it's safe for you, speak to your doctor or pharmacist before taking sildenafil if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to sildenafil or any other medicine
- are taking medicines called nitrates for chest pain ([angina](#))
- have a serious heart or liver problem
- have recently had a [stroke](#), [heart attack](#) or a heart problem – your doctor should carefully check whether your heart can take the additional strain of having sex
- have [low blood pressure](#) (hypotension)
- have a rare inherited eye disease, such as retinitis pigmentosa
- have [sickle cell anaemia](#) (an abnormality of red blood cells), leukaemia (cancer of blood cells) or [multiple myeloma](#) (cancer of bone marrow)
- have a deformity of your penis or [Peyronie's disease](#) (curved penis)
- have a [stomach ulcer](#)
- have a bleeding problem like [haemophilia](#)

How and where to get sildenafil

On the NHS

You can get sildenafil on the NHS if you have erectile dysfunction or pulmonary hypertension.

Branded versions of sildenafil such as Viagra are not available on the NHS, except in special circumstances.

Private prescription

You can also get sildenafil on a private prescription from your doctor. This means you'll need to pay the full cost of the medicine.

From a pharmacy

You can buy sildenafil from Swift Pharmacy after a discussion with the pharmacist or booking an appointment on our website, [Please Click Here](#).

They'll ask you some questions about your general health to make sure sildenafil is safe for you to take. You can also talk to them about side effects.

If the pharmacist has any concerns about whether sildenafil is safe for you, they may advise you to see your doctor.

Dosage and strength for erectile dysfunction

Sildenafil tablets for [erectile dysfunction](#) come in different strengths ranging from 25mg to 100mg.

The usual dose is 50mg, when you need it. Do not take it more than once a day.

The dose can be increased to 100mg or decreased to 25mg depending on its effect.

Take sildenafil up to 4 hours before you want to have sex. For sildenafil to work properly, you'll need to be sexually excited.

How to take tablets

Swallow tablets whole with a drink of water or juice (but not grapefruit juice).

For erectile dysfunction, it's best to take sildenafil on an empty stomach. It may take longer to work if you take it with food.

If you take too much

Taking too much sildenafil can cause unpleasant side effects.

Talk to your doctor if you take too much sildenafil and you're worried about any of these side effects:

- headaches
- dizziness
- indigestion
- blocked nose
- changes to your vision

Side effects of sildenafil

Like all medicines, sildenafil can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them.

Common side effects

Common side effects of sildenafil happen in more than 1 in 100 people.

If you're taking it for erection problems you're unlikely to get side effects as you're only taking it for a short time.

If you're taking sildenafil for pulmonary hypertension and get these side effects, there are things you can do to help cope with them:

Headaches

Feeling sick (nausea)

Flushing including hot flushes

Indigestion

Stuffy nose

Feeling dizzy

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if the advice on how to cope does not help or the side effects get worse.

Serious side effects

Serious side effects are rare and happen in less than 1 in 1,000 people.

Stop taking sildenafil and call your doctor or call 111 straight away if you have a sudden decrease or loss of vision.

Serious allergic reaction

In rare cases, it's possible to have a serious allergic reaction ([anaphylaxis](#)) to sildenafil.

Taking sildenafil with other medicines and herbal supplements

Cautions with other medicines

Some medicines do not mix well with sildenafil.

Tell your pharmacist or doctor if you're taking any of these medicines before you start sildenafil:

- nitrates for chest pain ([angina](#))
- riociguat for pulmonary hypertension

Mixing sildenafil with herbal remedies or supplements

It's not possible to say that [herbal remedies](#) and supplements are safe to take with sildenafil. They're not tested in the same way as pharmacy and prescription medicines.

Important: Medicine safety

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you're taking any other medicines, including herbal remedies, vitamins or supplements.

Common questions about sildenafil

How does sildenafil work?

Sildenafil belongs to a group of medicines called phosphodiesterase 5 (PDE5) inhibitors.

It works if you have [erection problems](#) by temporarily increasing blood flow to your penis when you get sexually excited.

It works in [pulmonary hypertension](#) by relaxing blood vessels in your chest. This increases the blood supply to your lungs and reduces the workload of your heart.

How well does it work for erection problems?

Sildenafil works well for erectile dysfunction.

If sildenafil does not work for you, it may be because:

- you have not waited long enough after taking it before trying to have sex
- you have waited too long after taking it to have sex
- the dose is not high enough
- you're not sexually aroused

Are there any long-term side effects?

Sildenafil is safe to take for a long time.

There do not seem to be any lasting harmful effects from taking it for many months and years.

How does it compare to other medicines that can treat erection problems?

If sildenafil does not work, there are other tablets you could try that work in a similar way, such as:

- [tadalafil](#) (Cialis) – can be taken up to 36 hours before sex
- avanafil (Spedra) – can be taken up to around 4 hours before sex
- vardenafil (Levitra) – can be taken up to around 4 hours before sex

You could also try a medicine called alprostadil. This is a synthetic hormone that helps to stimulate blood flow to the penis.

Alprostadil comes as:

- an injection directly into your penis
- a small pellet placed inside your urethra (the tube that carries pee from your bladder to the tip of your penis)

If you cannot get erections because of a hormonal problem, your GP may refer you to an endocrinologist (who specialises in the treatment of hormonal problems).

You may benefit from treatment using injections of synthetic hormones to restore your hormone levels to normal.

Are there other treatments for erectile dysfunction?

Other treatments for [erectile dysfunction](#) include:

- a vacuum pump
- psychological treatments
- penile implants
- pelvic floor muscle exercises

Is there a herbal Viagra?

There are lots of treatments that claim to be a "herbal Viagra". In fact, there's no such thing.

A herbal Viagra has never been approved as a treatment for erectile dysfunction.

Plus, these treatments may be fake or unsafe.

Can women use it?

Women can take sildenafil for pulmonary hypertension.

There's no good evidence that sildenafil works for women with sexual problems.

Will it affect my contraception?

Sildenafil does not affect any type of contraception, including the [combined pill](#) or [emergency contraception](#).

Can I drive or ride a bike?

Sildenafil does not make you sleepy and so it's usually safe to drive or ride a bike while taking this medicine.

However, do not drive, cycle or operate machinery if it makes you feel dizzy or affects your eyesight.

Can I drink alcohol while taking sildenafil?

Yes, you can drink alcohol while taking sildenafil.

But drinking lots of alcohol can make it more difficult to get an erection. To get the most benefit from sildenafil if you're taking it for erection problems, do not drink much alcohol before taking it.

Is there any food or drink I need to avoid?

Do not drink grapefruit juice if you're taking sildenafil (Revatio) for pulmonary hypertension. It affects the way the medicine works.

You can eat and drink normally while taking sildenafil to get an erection.

Will recreational drugs affect it?

Taking poppers (amyl nitrite) with sildenafil can have a dangerous effect on your heart.

It can also be dangerous to take sildenafil with:

- stimulants like MDMA (ecstasy) or cocaine
- hallucinogens like LSD
- novel psychoactive substances (which used to be known as legal highs) like mephedrone

Sildenafil has not been properly tested with recreational drugs.

Talk to your doctor if you think you might use any recreational drugs with sildenafil.

You can find out about the side effects of recreational drugs on the [Frank website](#).

Can lifestyle changes help with erection problems?

Erection problems ([erectile dysfunction](#)) can often get better if you make changes to your lifestyle, such as:

- maintaining a [healthy weight](#)
- [quitting smoking](#)
- [cutting down on the amount of alcohol you drink](#)
- not taking recreational drugs
- [exercising](#)
- reducing [stress](#)

Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/sildenafil-viagra/>