

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION IN CHINESE MEDICINE

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ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION - IMPOTENCE

Repeated inability to get or keep an erection firm enough for sexual intercourse.

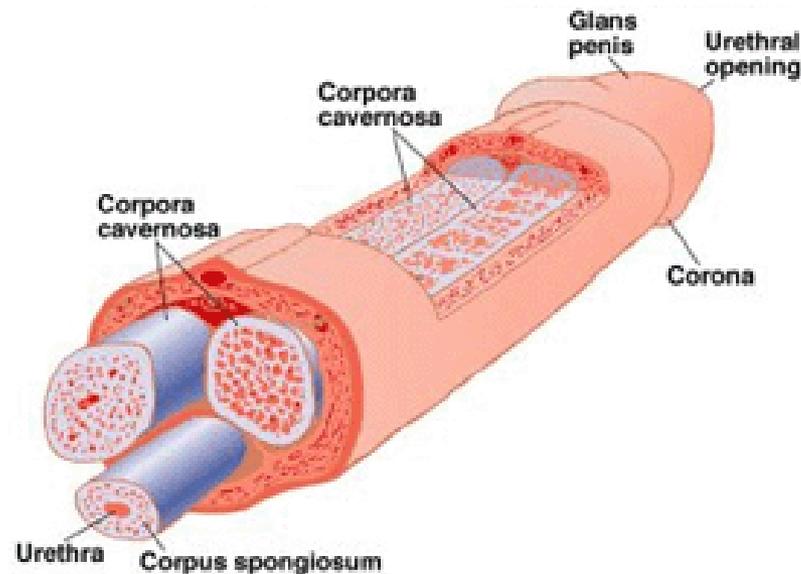
Erectile dysfunction, or ED can be:

a total inability to achieve erection
an inconsistent ability to do so
or a tendency to sustain only brief erections.

- Therefore definition of ED and estimation of its incidence is difficult.
- Estimates range from 15 million to 30 million men (in the USA).
- According to the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS), for every 1,000 men in the United States, 7.7 physician office visits were made for ED in 1985. By 1999, that rate had nearly tripled to 22.3.

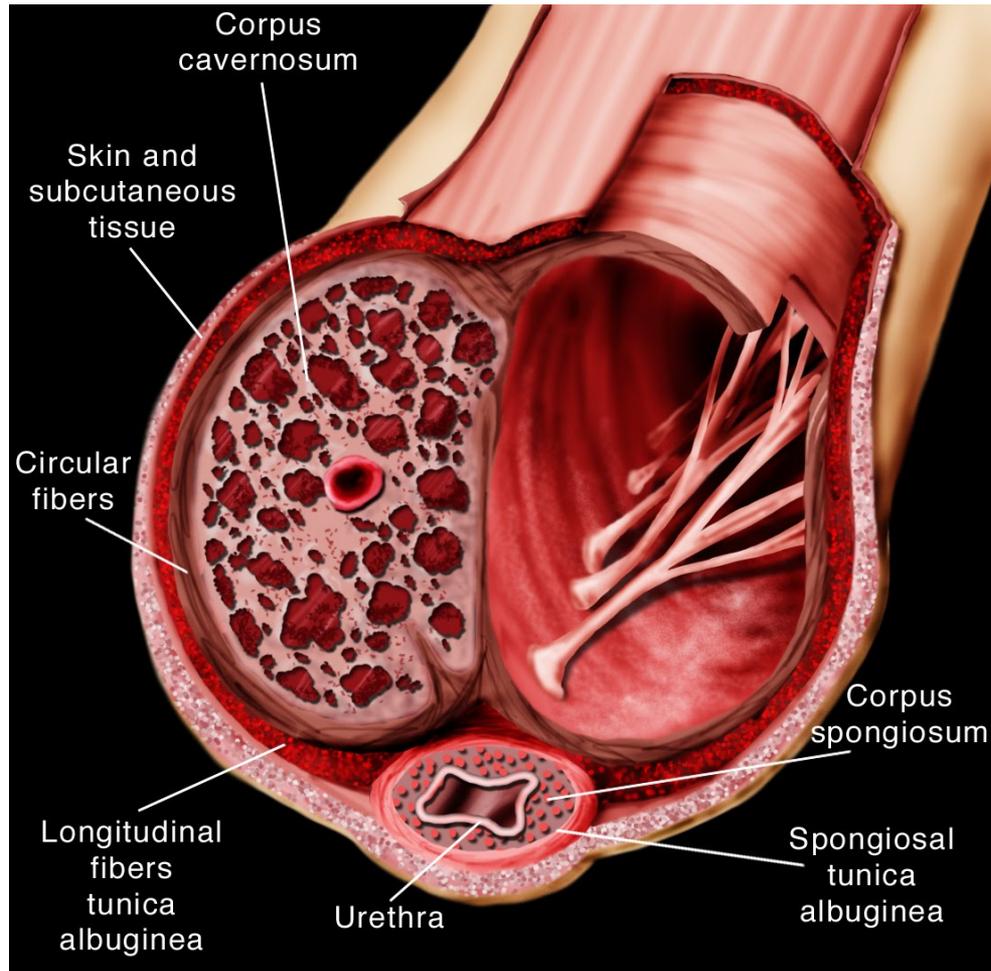
- In older men, ED usually has a physical cause, such as disease, injury, or side effects of drugs.
- Any disorder that injures the nerves or impairs blood flow in the penis has the potential to cause ED.
- The incidence of erectile dysfunction increases with age: about 5 percent of 40-year-old men and between 15 and 25 percent of 65-year-old men experience ED.
- However, ED is not an inevitable part of aging.

- Two chambers called the corpora cavernosa run the length of the organ.
- The corpora cavernosa are surrounded by the tunica albuginea.
- A spongy tissue fills the chambers and contains smooth muscles, fibrous tissues, spaces, veins, and arteries.
- The urethra, which is the channel for urine and ejaculate, runs along the underside of the corpora cavernosa and is surrounded by the corpus spongiosum.



Corpus cavernosum

Huang
Membranes =
Chong Mai



Blood vessels =
Chong Mai

Corpus spongiosum

Huang
Membranes =
Chong Mai

Urethra = Kidneys/Bladder

The corpora cavernosa, which can be likened to hydraulic cylinders, create structural rigidity.

The corpora cavernosa are cigar-shaped tubes of strong connective tissue, filled with spongy muscle-lined cavities.

Relaxation of vascular muscle causes inflow of blood and expansion of the corpora's inner sponge during erection.

As a result its wall, the tunica albuginea, is stretched tightly enough to produce rigidity. In addition to defining the shape of the erect penis, the tunica also has a key role in limiting blood outflow during erection.

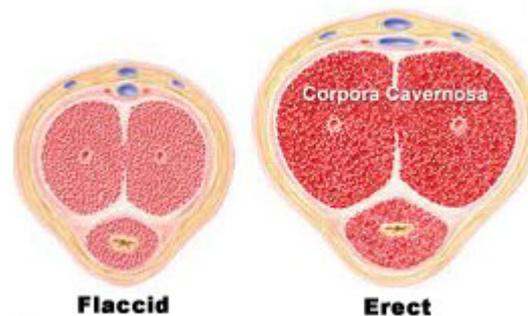
The corpus spongiosum contains the urethra, or excretory channel.

Erection begins with sensory or mental stimulation, or both.

Impulses from the brain and local nerves cause the muscles of the corpora cavernosa to relax, allowing blood to flow in and fill the spaces. The blood creates pressure in the corpora cavernosa, making the penis expand. The tunica albuginea helps trap the blood in the corpora cavernosa, thereby sustaining erection. When muscles in the penis contract to stop the inflow of blood and open outflow channels, erection is reversed.

An erection requires a precise sequence of events:

nerve impulses in the brain, spinal column, and area around the penis, response in muscles, fibrous tissues, veins, and arteries in and near the corpora cavernosa.



Damage to nerves, arteries, smooth muscles, and fibrous tissues is the most common cause of ED.

Diseases—such as diabetes, kidney disease, chronic alcoholism, multiple sclerosis, atherosclerosis, vascular disease, and neurologic disease—account for about 70% of ED cases. Between 35 and 50 percent of men with diabetes experience ED.

The same life habits that contribute to heart disease and vascular problems also raise the risk of erectile dysfunction. Smoking, being overweight, and avoiding exercise are possible causes of ED.

Surgery (especially radical prostate and bladder surgery for cancer) can injure nerves and arteries near the penis, causing ED.

Injury to the penis, spinal cord, prostate, bladder, and pelvis can lead to ED by harming nerves, smooth muscles, arteries, and fibrous tissues of the corpora cavernosa.

Many common medicines - blood pressure drugs, antihistamines, antidepressants, tranquilizers, appetite suppressants, and cimetidine—can produce ED as a side effect.

Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, guilt, depression, low self-esteem, and fear of sexual failure may cause 10 to 20 percent of ED cases. Other possible causes are smoking, which affects blood flow in veins and arteries, and hormonal abnormalities, such as not enough testosterone.

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION IN CHINESE MEDICINE

Erectile dysfunction is called *Yang Wei* [阳 痿] in Chinese medicine.

Yang [阳] means “Yang”

[疒] is the radical indicating a “disease”

Wei [委] means “listless” or “withering”

Therefore, the term *Yang Wei* indicates a disease characterized by “listlessness of Yang”. Interestingly, the ancient term for erectile dysfunction was actually *Yin Wei* in which *Yin* refers to “Yin” as in “Yin-Yang”. This difference in terminology is probably due to the fact that *Yin* in *Yin Wei* refers to the penis that is called *Yin Jing* [阴 茎] in Chinese, which literally means “Yin Stem”.

In some passages, erectile dysfunction is also called *Jin Wei* 筋 痿, literally “withering of *Jin*” in which “*Jin*” stands for *Zong Jin* 宗 筋, i.e. the “Ancestral Muscle” (penis).

In ancient times, erectile dysfunction was also sometimes called *Jin Wei* [筋痿] which means “listlessness of the sinews”. This name is probably related to the term *Zong Jin* [宗筋] (Ancestral Muscle or Sinew) which was another term for the penis.

Su Wen chapter 44: “*Avarice, disappointment, excessive desire and excessive sexual activity cause weakness of the sinews leading to Jin Wei.*”

Chapter 70 of the “Su Wen” mentions erectile dysfunction (calling it *Yin Wei*): “*When the energy of Tai Yin predominates... .. there is erectile dysfunction from great decline of Qi with inability to rise.*”

Chapter 44 of the “Su Wen”:

“When one is affected by desire without satisfaction and pursues outside excessive goals, or when one engages in excessive sexual activity, the penis [Zong Jin, Ancestral Muscle] will become slack causing erectile dysfunction [Jin Wei] and seminal emissions.”

Chapter 5 of the “Su Wen”:

“At 60, there is impotence, a great deficiency of Qi and the orifices are obstructed.”

Chapter 13 of the “Ling Shu” (on the Muscle channels):

“When the Muscle channel of the Jue Yin of the Leg [Liver] is diseased...the sexual organ cannot be used.”

The “Complete Book of Jing Yue” (*Jing Yue Quan Shu*, 1624) relates the aetiology of erectile dysfunction to emotional stress:

“Worry and pensiveness deplete [Qi], excessive worry leads to impotence.”