



Diabetes and Erectile Dysfunction

Colin – Type 1 Patient

I think the main event for me, it was embarrassing to talk about at one time and now it's not, is erectile dysfunction.

For me, diabetes has not just taken away the employment that I had, the journeys that I experienced, but it's also taken away that side of a relationship.

As a man, you are a man because you can make love to somebody and you can do the right things and you can do it but when you have that ability taken away from you, you enter into a relationship with a partner and there is more in that relationship than just loving each other. There is, how do you tell....? When you go on your first date, on your second date and your third date and as an adult, you end up going to a date that will result, hopefully, in you going to bed with each other. But you know that when that moment comes, you've got to admit something and that's scary. That is scary.

Dr Deborah Wake – Diabetes Consultant

People with diabetes, particularly men are at a much higher risk of having sexual problems such as erectile dysfunction. And if you look at men over 50 with diabetes, about 50% will have had some experience with erectile problems. And it's something that just isn't really talked about very much. So people can often feel very isolated and not know who to turn to and not necessarily want to speak or seek help with it. But it is important to do so because actually there's a lot of good treatments available.

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But you've got to see them not as, as female or male, just practitioners and that they're not interested in what they're looking at. They just want the solution to your problem. And once you get that, you can in go in and say, excuse me, and I can't get it up. Whatever, however dialogue you use, they're fine. They've seen it, they've done it, they know what it's all about, but once you accept that, they can help you.



Dr Deborah Wake – Diabetes Consultant

When a man presents with erectile problems to healthcare professional, usually we will screen them to find out whether there's any reversible causes such as a reduction in key hormones like testosterone in the body. And that's something that can be rectified with replacement treatment. Often the problem is due to the diabetes having an effect on the blood or the nerve supply to the sexual area. Sometimes that's in part reversible by improving blood sugar control, improving blood pressure and cholesterol. And sometimes it isn't completely reversible, but even then, often treatments like Viagra, that most people have heard of, or other similar tablets can actually work incredibly well. When these don't work, then we can also have an option of referring to more specialist services and they will have other treatments such as injectable treatments, vacuum pumps, and other things that can be tried in those scenarios. And usually it's possible to find a solution to the problem.

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One thing it does do though, it's certainly makes the relationship you have valid. So I would say to anybody, don't ever be afraid of being honest because what it does do, ultimately, when you get your head around it and you take it away from the sexual point of view, it's not all about sex. It's all about relationships. And I think that's one thing I've learned as well in diabetes.

