



Patient Information Leaflet: Intracavernosal Injections for Erectile Dysfunction

What Are Intracavernosal Injections?

Intracavernosal injections are a treatment for erectile dysfunction, which means difficulty getting or maintaining an erection firm enough for sexual activity.

The treatment involves injecting a small amount of prescribed medication directly into the side of the penis. The medicine increases blood flow within the penis, helping to produce an erection.

Although the idea of injecting the penis can understandably feel daunting at first, the needle is very fine. You will be shown how to prepare and administer your injection safely before using the treatment independently at home.

Why Have I Been Offered Injection Treatment?

Intracavernosal injections may be recommended when tablet treatments have not worked well enough, have caused side effects or are not suitable for you.

They may also be used to help with erectile dysfunction following treatments such as prostate surgery.

Your consultant will discuss whether injection therapy is appropriate for you based on your medical history, current medication and the possible causes of your erectile difficulties.

How Do the Injections Work?

The medicine works by relaxing the blood vessels and erectile tissue within the penis. This allows more blood to enter the penis and helps produce an erection.



Unlike some erectile dysfunction tablets, an erection can develop without sexual stimulation.

The dose you need is individual to you. Your clinical team will advise you on the **exact medication and dose** to use.

Do not change your dose unless you have been specifically advised to do so.

Learning How to Use the Injection

You will be shown how to use the injection safely by an appropriately trained healthcare professional.

During your teaching, you will learn:

- How to prepare the medication
- How to prepare the injection device or syringe
- Where to inject
- How to clean the injection site
- How to insert the needle safely
- How to dispose of needles and other sharps
- How frequently you can use the treatment
- What to do if the injection does not produce the expected response
- What to do if your erection lasts too long

Your initial dose may be adjusted until an appropriate response is achieved.

Only use the dose prescribed for you.

How Do I Give the Injection?

Always follow the instructions given by your clinical team for your particular medication and injection device.

In general:

- Wash your hands thoroughly
- Prepare your medication exactly as you have been shown



- Check that you have the correct medication and dose
- Sit or stand somewhere comfortable with good lighting
- Clean the recommended injection site
- Hold the penis gently stretched out
- Inject into the **side of the shaft of the penis** at the site demonstrated to you
- Avoid visible blood vessels
- Inject the medication as you have been taught
- Remove the needle carefully
- Apply gentle pressure to the injection site for several minutes to reduce bleeding or bruising
- Dispose of the needle immediately in an approved sharps container

You should alternate the side and position of your injections rather than repeatedly using exactly the same site.

Never inject into the head of the penis, the underside where the urethra runs or into a visible blood vessel.

How Quickly Will It Work?

The time taken to develop an erection varies depending on the medication, dose and your individual response.

Your clinical team will explain what to expect from the medication prescribed to you.

The aim is to produce an erection that is firm enough for sexual activity but does not last longer than necessary.

Do not give yourself another injection because the first injection has not worked as well or as quickly as expected.

Contact the clinic for advice if your prescribed dose is repeatedly ineffective.

Will the Injection Hurt?

Most people experience only mild discomfort because a very fine needle is used.

You may notice:

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- A brief sharp or stinging feeling when the needle enters the skin
- Mild aching or discomfort in the penis
- A small amount of bleeding from the injection site
- Minor bruising

Some medications can cause aching or discomfort in the penis as the erection develops.

If you experience significant or persistent pain, please discuss this with your consultant.

What Are the Possible Risks?

Intracavernosal injections are an established treatment for erectile dysfunction, but they can cause side effects.

These may include:

- **Pain or aching in the penis**
- **Bruising or bleeding** at the injection site
- A small amount of swelling
- An erection that lasts longer than intended
- **Priapism**, which is a prolonged erection that does not go down
- Development of areas of thickened or scarred tissue within the penis
- Curvature or changes in the shape of the penis
- Reduced effectiveness over time
- Difficulty administering the injection

Your consultant will discuss the risks associated with the particular medication prescribed to you.

What is Priapism?

Priapism is a prolonged erection that does not go down normally.

This is an important potential complication of intracavernosal injection treatment because a prolonged erection can damage the erectile tissue if it is not treated promptly.



You will be given instructions about what to do if your erection lasts longer than expected.

If your erection lasts for 4 hours:

You must seek urgent medical attention.

Do not wait for the erection to settle on its own and do not go to sleep hoping it will have resolved by the morning.

Attend your nearest **Accident and Emergency Department (A&E)** and tell the healthcare team that you have used an intracavernosal injection for erectile dysfunction.

Prompt treatment can reduce the risk of permanent damage to the penis.

Important Safety Information

- Use **only the medication and dose prescribed for you**
- Never increase the dose without advice from your clinical team
- Never repeat an injection because the first dose appears not to have worked
- Follow the instructions you have been given about how frequently the medication can be used
- Never share your medication, needles or injection device with another person
- Use a new needle for every injection
- Rotate injection sites
- Dispose of used needles in an approved sharps container
- Keep your medication and injection equipment safely away from children
- Follow the storage instructions supplied with your medication

Tell your consultant if you take **blood thinning medication**, have a bleeding disorder or have a condition that may increase your risk of prolonged erections.

When to Contact the Clinic

Please contact us if:

- The prescribed dose is not producing a satisfactory erection



- Your erections are consistently lasting longer than expected
- You experience significant pain following injections
- You develop persistent bruising or bleeding
- You notice a new lump, area of thickening or curvature of the penis
- You are unsure about your injection technique
- You have difficulty using the injection device
- You are unsure whether your medication is safe to use

Do not adjust your prescribed dose yourself. Your clinical team can review your response and advise whether the dose or treatment needs to be changed.

When to Seek Urgent Medical Attention

Seek urgent medical attention if you develop:

- **An erection lasting 4 hours**
- Severe or increasing penile pain
- Significant swelling or discolouration
- Heavy or persistent bleeding from the injection site
- Any other severe or unexpected reaction following the injection

A prolonged erection requires urgent assessment because delaying treatment can cause permanent damage to the erectile tissue.

Will I Need a Follow-Up?

Your consultant may arrange a follow-up appointment to check how well the treatment is working.

At your review, you can discuss:

- The quality and duration of your erections
- Whether your prescribed dose is appropriate
- Any pain or other side effects
- Any difficulty administering the injections
- Changes in the shape or feel of the penis
- Any concerns about sexual function



Your treatment can then be adjusted if necessary.

Questions or Concerns?

If you have any questions about your medication, injection technique or how to manage a problem following treatment, please contact us.

 **The Forbury Clinic**

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