



VACUUM ERECTION ASSISTANCE DEVICES

Information from The British Association of Urological Surgeons (BAUS) about devices to manage impotence

You have been given this leaflet because you have been diagnosed with erectile dysfunction (impotence). The aim of the leaflet is to provide you with detailed information about the condition.

We have consulted specialist surgeons during its preparation, so it represents best practice in UK urology. You should use it in addition to any advice already given to you.

To view this leaflet online, scan the QR code (right) or type the short URL below it into your web browser.



<http://rb.gy/cqo10>

KEY POINTS

- Vacuum erection assistance devices (VEDs) are a simple and effective means of producing an erection with a very low risk of side-effects
- Some men qualify to receive their devices on an NHS prescription, but most will need to buy the device themselves
- The cost of a device is between £60 and £350
- You should not keep the constriction ring on your penis for longer than 30 minutes
- VEDs should be used with caution in patients taking blood-thinning medications, or with other diseases of the blood that impair the normal clotting processes

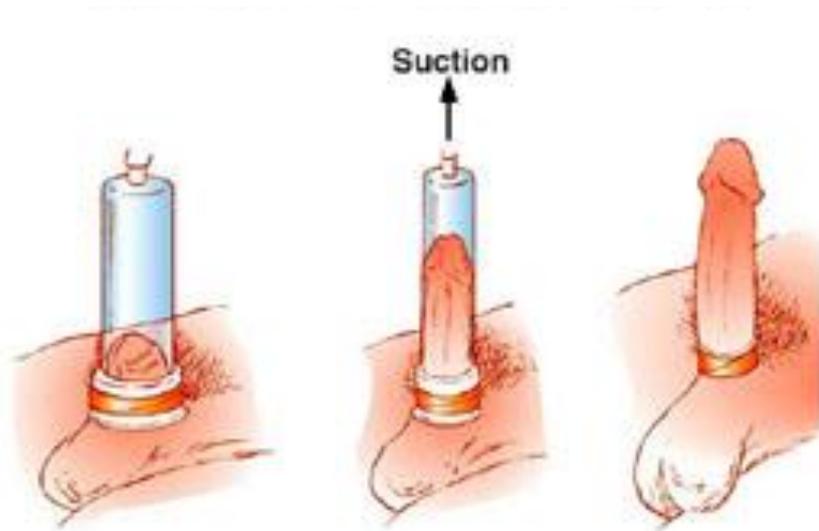
What are vacuum erection assistance devices?

Vacuum erection assistance devices are non-invasive, mechanical pumps which are used to help men with erectile dysfunction to get an erection. There are many types (both battery-operated and manually-operated), all of which are very effective.

How do they work?

VEDs work by putting your penis into a plastic cylinder from which the air is removed with a pump. This results in a vacuum within the cylinder that

causes the penis to fill with blood, resulting in an erection. You then slide a constriction ring around the base of your penis to prevent the blood from escaping, thus maintaining your erection (pictured below).



How long are they effective?

It only takes a few minutes to obtain a full erection using a vacuum device. Once your penis is erect and you have put the constriction ring in place on the penis, you can release the vacuum and remove the cylinder.

The constriction ring stops blood from escaping from the penis so that you keep your erection. You can then proceed to sexual intercourse. You should not leave the constriction ring on your penis for more than 30 minutes because this can cause damage.

Are there any side-effects?

Yes, but these are minor. You often notice discolouration or bruising of your penis. Some patients complain that their penis feels “cold”, and may lack the stability of a natural erection, but this does not usually cause a problem.

You may find the constriction ring slightly uncomfortable. It also prevents the flow of semen during orgasm (climax), which may be uncomfortable. This does no harm because the semen goes back into your bladder and is passed out with your urine when next you empty.

Most men using VEDs find them an acceptable method of obtaining an erection with a low risk of side-effects and good results, albeit after some practice.

Where can I get a device?

Most patients must buy their own device. You will usually be required to pay between £60 and £350 for your VED.

Specific treatment is only available on the NHS (Schedule 2) to patients who:

- have diabetes mellitus, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, poliomyelitis;
- have renal failure treated by dialysis or transplantation;
- have had radical pelvic surgery (e.g. radical prostatectomy) or have been treated for prostate cancer (using surgery and other treatments);
- have had severe pelvic injury, single-gene neurological disease, spinal cord injury or spina bifida; or
- are not included in the above categories but were receiving NHS treatment (such as Caverject™, Viagra™ or Viridal™) for their erectile dysfunction on or before 14 September 1998.

If you do not have any of the conditions listed above, you will need to get a private prescription from your GP.

What happens when sexual activity has finished?

When you have completed intercourse, you need to remove the constriction ring without delay. This is important because it may cause irreversible damage if left on the penis for too long. Grasp the ring by its side tabs and stretched it to allow the trapped blood to drain out of the penis. You should then be able to remove the ring without difficulty.

This can be a little fiddly but with, patience and practice, it becomes easier. If you find the ring difficult to grasp through your pubic hair, we recommend trimming or shaving off the hair to make this process easier.

How can I try a device?

We will normally arrange for you to be seen in a dedicated clinic by a specialist nurse or a representative. He/she will explain the device to you, demonstrate how to use it and address any concerns you may have. Once you are happy with its use, we will tell you how to purchase the device. Some centres may offer VEDs for a trial period. The devices can be cleaned with soap and water after use, and can be reused many times.

Are there any other important points?

It is important that you tell your doctor if you are on any blood thinning medications (e.g. aspirin, warfarin, clopidogrel). You should also be sure to tell your doctors if you suffer from any blood disorders, because these can increase the risk of side-effects, making a VED unsuitable for you.

Smoking can seriously impair your erectile function and we would advise you to stop smoking completely if you have problems with erections. For advice on stopping, you can:

- contact your GP;
- access your local [NHS Smoking Help Online](#); or
- ring the Smoke-Free National Helpline on **0300 123 1044**.

What sources have we used to prepare this leaflet?

This leaflet uses information from consensus panels and other evidence-based sources including:

- the [Department of Health \(England\)](#);
- the [Cochrane Collaboration](#); and
- the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#).

It also follows style guidelines from:

- the [Royal National Institute for Blind People \(RNIB\)](#);
- the [Information Standard](#);
- the [Patient Information Forum](#); and
- the [Plain English Campaign](#).

DISCLAIMER

Whilst we have made every effort to give accurate information, there may still be errors or omissions in this leaflet. BAUS cannot accept responsibility for any loss from action taken (or not taken) as a result of this information.

PLEASE NOTE: the staff at BAUS are not medically trained, and are unable to answer questions about the information provided in this leaflet. If you have any questions, you should contact your Urologist, Specialist Nurse or GP in the first instance.