

## Age related changes to sexual function

As men age they take longer to become sexually aroused. Although this may be perceived as a decline in sexual function, it can be a welcome change. Often those in their 50s have less career and family demands so that taking more time for sex can be positive.

Normal age related changes to male sexual function are as follows:

- Testosterone levels gradually decline from the age of 40. Although testosterone levels will decrease with age most men's levels will remain within normal limits and sufficient enough for sexual wellbeing. Testosterone influences sexual desire however its association with erection response is less clear.
- Less pre-ejaculatory fluid.
- Reduced elevation of erection i.e. when erect the penis does not sit up against the abdomen. The penis may not stand to attention as it used to but this allows for greater flexibility for oral sex and varied intercourse positions.
- Decreased penile sensitivity: Penile responsiveness to sensory stimulation slows due to reduced nerve conduction. Often partners will have come to expect spontaneous erections. This problem is overcome with more direct and firmer stimulation of the penis.
- Penile blood flow slows, even in healthy men. This influences the rigidity of erections. The penis continues to have sufficient rigidity for penetration; however it does not reach the same firmness of earlier years on a regular basis. Cock rings are effective for a firmer erection sensation and they look good too.
- Erections may not last as long and may go up and down in one session. This means that you might lose your erection whilst giving oral sex but get it back when your partner touches your penis. It is enjoyable to receive caresses on a semi rigid or flaccid penis; however some men interpret this physiological



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change negatively and stop sex, rather than increasing physical and or mental stimulation to regain erection.

- Erotic thoughts and relationship intimacy become increasingly important. Men are less likely to maintain an erection when they are not mentally aroused. Distraction, fatigue, relationship conflict and stress are more likely to impact on sexual function with age.
- Increased time to ejaculation. This is often beneficial for partners and allows for a more prolonged love making session.
- Longer refractory period after orgasm. This is the time between last orgasm and next erection. As men age this can be hours to days. Although sex becomes less frequent sexual satisfaction can increase with age.



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