
Vacuum Erection Assistance Devices

Frequently Asked Questions

What are vacuum-erection assistance devices?

Vacuum therapy is a non-invasive method of obtaining and sustaining an erection in men with impotence (erectile dysfunction). An erection is obtained by inducing a negative pressure with a hand, or battery-operated pump. To use this device, the penis is inserted into a cylinder with plenty of lubrication being used to provide a seal at the base of the penis.

How do they work?

Activation of the vacuum device removes air from the cylinder. This is accomplished using either a small electric motor or a hand-operated pump. The negative pressure produced encourages blood to flow into the penis, thus causing an erection. A constriction ring is then slipped around the base of the penis to hold blood in and to maintain the erection.

How long are they effective?

It may take up to 7 minutes to obtain a full erection using the vacuum device but, once an erection has been obtained, the cylinder is removed and the constriction ring maintains the erection. The constriction ring should not be left in place for more than 30 minutes to prevent bruising or discoloration of the penis. Some patients find this process rather mechanical and it can make the penis feel "cold". The constriction ring can, sometimes, be slightly uncomfortable and about 60% of men experience some difficulty with ejaculation since the constriction ring stops the flow of semen; this causes no harm although it may be slightly uncomfortable at the time of climax. Approximately 70% of men are able to obtain an erection using this method but are sometimes put off by the expense; the pumps cost between \$150 and \$1000.

What happens when sexual activity has finished?

Once intercourse has been completed, the constriction ring should be grasped firmly by its tabs and stretched, to allow the trapped blood to pass out of the penis. Once the erection has subsided, the constriction ring can be removed from the penis without difficulty.

How can I try a device?

Patients who wish to try a vacuum device can purchase one directly through an adult store, pharmacy or from the manufacturers. The practice will be happy to give you advice or contact details in order to be able to do this. Vacuum pumps can be re-used many times after washing with soap and water.

Vacuum Erection Assistance Devices continued...

Who can I contact for more help or information?

Dr Peter Campbell

Suite 9, level 9, Evan Thomson Building, The Wesley Hospital,
Chasely St,

Auchenflower, QLD 4066

(07) 3367 1608,

www.campbellurology.com.au

The Wesley Hospital, Urology Ward

451 Coronation Drive,

Auchenflower, QLD 4066

(07) 3232 7168

www.uhc.com.au/wesley

The Wesley Emergency Centre

451 coronation Drive,

Auchenflower, QLD 4066

(07) 3232 7333

Greenslopes Private Hospital, Continence Advisor

Newdgate St,

Greenslopes, QLD 4120

(07) 3394 7978

www.greenslopesprivate.com.au

Greenslopes Private Hospital Urology Ward

Newdgate St,

Greenslopes, QLD 4120

(07) 3394 7261

www.greenslopesprivate.com.au

Greenslopes Private Hospital Emergency Centre

Newdgate St,

Greenslopes, QLD 4120

(07) 3394 6777

www.greenslopesprivate.com.au

**The Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital,
Urodynamics Department**

Kessels Rd,

Coopers plains, QLD 4108

(07) 3275 6346

American Urological Association Foundation

1000 Corporate Blvd, Suite 410,

Linthicum, MD 21090

1800 828 7866

www.urologyhealth.org

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