

WHAT IS PEYRONIE'S DISEASE?

Peyronie's disease (PD) is a medical condition that affects the penis as a result of fibrous scar tissue (plaque) developing on the inside of the penile shaft. This plaque can cause the penis to bend, curve or take on an hour glassed shape during erection, leading to erections which can be painful, sexual/erectile dysfunction, shortening of the penis and emotional distress. While the exact cause of Peyronie's disease remains unclear, it is generally thought to result from trauma or injury to the penis, leading to abnormal healing processes.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PEYRONIE'S DISEASE

The signs and symptoms of Peyronie's disease can vary from person to person and may include:

PENILE CURVATURE

- A noticeable bend, curve or narrowing of the penis during erection, which may be severe in some cases.

PAINFUL ERECTIONS

- Pain during erections or sometimes when the penis is flaccid.

PALPABLE PLAQUE

- Hard lumps or areas of scar tissue that can be felt under the skin of the penis.

SHORTENING OF THE PENIS

- Some men experience a decrease in penis length over time.

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

- Difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection may develop, especially if the condition causes severe curvature or discomfort.

WHY DOES PEYRONIE'S DISEASE OCCUR?

The exact cause of Peyronie's disease is not fully understood, but it is generally believed to occur due to trauma or injury to the penis. These injuries may be minor, such as during sexual activity, or may involve more significant trauma. The trauma leads to the formation of scar tissue (plaque) as the body attempts to heal. Over time, the scar tissue can cause the penis to bend or curve when erect. Genetic factors may also play a role, as some men with Peyronie's disease have a family history of the condition.

Other risk factors include:

AGE

- The likelihood of developing Peyronie's disease increases with age, especially in men over 50.

CONNECTIVE TISSUE DISORDERS

- Men with conditions such as Dupuytren's contracture (a hand disorder involving the thickening of connective tissue) may be at greater risk.

OTHER HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol have been associated with an increased risk of Peyronie's Disease.

PREVALENCE OF PEYRONIE'S DISEASE

Peyronie's disease is relatively common, affecting an estimated 5-9% of men, although the actual prevalence could be higher, as many men may not seek treatment or may not be diagnosed. The condition typically begins between the ages of 45 and 60 but can occur at any age. Men with certain risk factors, including those with a family history of PD, are more likely to develop the disease.

TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR PEYRONIE'S DISEASE

Treatment for Peyronie's disease aims to reduce pain, improve erectile function, and correct penile curvature. The approach to treatment depends on the severity of the condition and whether the patient has ongoing pain or erectile dysfunction. Common treatment options include:

1. MEDICATIONS:

ORAL MEDICATIONS

- Drugs such as oral pentoxifylline have been shown to help reduce plaque size and improve curvature in some cases.

INJECTION THERAPY

- Injections of medications like verapamil or corticosteroids may help break down the plaque and reduce curvature.

2. SURGERY:

PLIPLICATION SURGERY

- This involves suturing the longer side of the penis to straighten it. It is typically done when the curvature is severe and other treatments have not worked.

PLAQUE EXCISION OR INCISION SURGERY

- The scar tissue is removed or incised, and sometimes a graft is placed to straighten the penis.

PENILE IMPLANTS

- For men with severe erectile dysfunction and significant curvature, a penile prosthesis may be recommended.

3. VACUUM DEVICES

- Some men use vacuum pumps to help stretch the penis and improve curvature.

4. SHOCKWAVE THERAPY

- Low-intensity shockwave therapy may be used to reduce pain and promote healing; its long-term effectiveness is still under study.

5. TRACTION DEVICES

- Penile traction devices are sometimes used to help straighten the penis by applying gentle, consistent force over time. They are typically worn for several hours a day for a period of months.

6. PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

- Because Peyronie's disease can cause emotional distress, it is important to seek counseling or psychological support. Issues like anxiety, depression, and relationship difficulties are common in men with this condition, especially if it plays a part in erectile dysfunction.

WHERE TO GET HELP

If you or a partner suspect that Peyronie's disease is present, it is important to seek help from a healthcare professional. You can start by consulting with:

GENERAL PRACTITIONER

- Speaking with your GP is a great place to start

UROLOGIST

- Doctors specialising in male urological health, including conditions like Peyronie's disease, erectile dysfunction, and other urological concerns.

SEXUAL HEALTH CLINICS

- Many clinics offer services for men dealing with sexual health and conditions like PD.

COUNSELING SERVICE

- Mental health professionals specializing in sexual health can offer support for the emotional challenges of Peyronie's disease.

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