

Intracavernosal Injections (Penile Injections for ED)

WARWIKI

Patient Information · A self-injected treatment for erectile dysfunction

Intracavernosal injection (ICI) is a treatment for erectile dysfunction in which you place a small amount of medicine into the side of the penis with a tiny needle to produce an erection. It is used when erection pills don't work or aren't suitable. It sounds intimidating, but the needle is very small, most men feel little, and it is one of the most reliable non-surgical treatments.

About This Treatment

The medicine (often **alprostadil**, or a compounded mix called **bimix** or **trimix**) relaxes the blood vessels in the erection chambers so blood flows in. It works **whether or not you feel aroused**, usually producing an erection within about **5–15 minutes** that lasts roughly 30–60 minutes.

- Your **first dose is given in the office** to find the right amount and make sure it is safe for you.
- You are then taught to **inject yourself at home**.
- It is often effective even when pills have failed, including after prostate surgery.

Is It Safe?

For most men, yes — when the dose is set carefully. The most important risk is a **prolonged erection (priapism)** lasting more than 4 hours, which is an emergency. Other effects include mild aching, occasional bruising, and, over time, firm spots (scarring) at injection sites — rotating sites helps prevent this.

LEARN THE TERMS

Erectile dysfunction (ED)

Trouble getting or keeping an erection firm enough for sex.

Intracavernosal

Into the erection chambers (corpora cavernosa) of the penis.

Alprostadil

A common single-medicine injection for ED.

Trimix / bimix

A compounded mix of two or three medicines used for injection.

Titration

Finding your correct dose, usually starting in the office.

Priapism

An erection lasting over 4 hours — a medical emergency.

PDE5 inhibitors

Erection pills (like sildenafil); ICI is an option when these fail.

WILL IT HURT? The needle is very fine and goes into the side of the shaft, where most men feel only a small pinch — not the sensitive top or underside. A mild ache afterward is common, especially with alprostadil. Your team will watch your first dose to be sure it's comfortable and safe.

How to Use It Safely

- 1 **First dose in the office** to set the right amount — never increase the dose on your own.
- 2 Inject into the **side of the shaft** (about the 3 or 9 o'clock position); **avoid the top and the underside**, and **switch sides** each time.
- 3 Press firmly on the spot for a couple of minutes afterward to limit bruising.
- 4 Use it **no more than your team advises** — generally not more than once in 24 hours or about 3 times a week.

Getting Ready

- Store the medicine as directed (some mixes need refrigeration).
- Tell your team about **blood thinners** and any heart conditions.
- Bring a partner to teaching if that helps you feel comfortable.

Seek emergency care if:

- An erection lasts **more than 4 hours** (priapism) — go to the ER; waiting can cause permanent damage
- You have severe pain, heavy bleeding, or signs of infection at the site
- You feel faint or have chest pain after a dose

Good to Know

- Carry the dose and timing info your team gives you.
- Report any new firm lumps or curving of the penis.

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. ICI uses a tiny needle to place medicine in the side of the penis, producing a reliable erection in about 5–15 minutes — useful when pills don't work.
2. Your first dose is set in the office; never raise the dose yourself, rotate injection sides, and don't exceed the limit you're given.
3. An erection lasting **over 4 hours is an emergency** — go to the ER right away.