

Talk, then take Viagra

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In its decade on the market, Viagra has helped thousands of men get back in the bedroom. But it might spark other problems that could lead to divorce, some marriage counselors maintain.

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The erectile-dysfunction remedy was introduced 10 years ago and became one of the best-selling drugs in history. According to Pfizer pharmaceutical's Web site about Viagra, 25 million men have taken it. Experts say the biggest problem is that men take the drug without talking with their partners. It makes them instant Don Juans and their partners might not be prepared for the change.

Sometimes, too, their improved self-esteem sends them looking for new, more willing partners.

A report published by the Harvard School of Medicine titled "Sexuality in Midlife and Beyond" suggests that while the drug may help resolve relationship pressure, it can cause other issues: "When intercourse is suddenly a possibility again, relationship issues can emerge or resurface, as can dramatic differences in libido. The bottom line is that couples should try to regard these drugs as an opportunity to renew their sexual relationship while realizing that ED drugs are neither a mandate to have intercourse nor a panacea for every problem in the bedroom."

The report helps readers understand how to deal with emotional issues concerning sex, including taking Viagra. While there are millions of success stories about Viagra use, the study notes, "The medication works only if the man is feeling sexual desire for his partner."

Dr. Suki Hanfling, a licensed clinical social worker and certified sex therapist who edited the report, said, "Viagra should be a tool for a couple, not just him. Couples should work together to solve their sexual problems, but sometimes that doesn't happen. That's my biggest problem with Viagra."

According to Hanfling, when a man takes Viagra and his sex drive goes from a little to a lot, it can cause problems for his wife. However, if a couple works together and the husband tells his wife beforehand, then Viagra should enhance their marriage.

"If someone is going to take Viagra, my advice is that they talk about it with their partner before getting it. Possibly they should even go with their partner to the physician's office to find out how to best use it," she said. "A lot of men will use it and have sex, but they leave out the woman."

If a divorce resulted from too much action in the bedroom or because he went looking for someone else, she said it was unlikely the drug was the only problem in the marriage.

Jenifer Jacobs, a spokeswoman for Viagra, said that wives dealing with oversexed husbands "are very rare situations."

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