PATIENT-FRIENDLY GUIDE

Viagra

(Sildenafil) Tablets

What it is, how it works, safety, and common questions

For general information only. Not a substitute for advice from a doctor or pharmacist.
Always follow the official patient leaflet that comes with your medicine.

1. What is Viagra?

Viagra is the brand name of **sildenafil citrate**, a prescription medicine used to treat **erectile dysfunction (ED)** – the persistent difficulty in getting or keeping an erection firm enough for sexual activity. It was first approved in 1998 and belongs to a group of medicines called **PDE5 inhibitors**. Sildenafil is also sold under other brand names and as generic tablets, and a different-strength version is used for pulmonary arterial hypertension (sold as Revatio).

> **Key point:** Viagra does not cause an erection by itself and is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac. It only works when there is sexual stimulation.

2. How does it work?

An erection happens when blood flow into the penis increases. During arousal the body releases nitric oxide, which raises a chemical called cGMP and relaxes the smooth muscle in the penile arteries. The enzyme **PDE5** breaks cGMP down again.

Sildenafil blocks PDE5. As a result, cGMP stays higher for longer, blood vessels stay relaxed, and more blood can flow in when the person is sexually stimulated.

Step	What happens
1. Arousal	Nerves release nitric oxide in the penis.
2. Signal	cGMP rises and the vessel muscles relax.
3. Sildenafil	PDE5 is blocked, so cGMP is not broken down quickly.
4. Result	Greater blood flow makes an erection easier to achieve and maintain.

3. Strengths and typical use

The medicine is available in **25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg** tablets. Your doctor decides the right dose for you based on your health, other medicines, and how you respond. General label information:

Topic	Typical information
Usual starting dose	50 mg; the doctor may lower it to 25 mg or raise it to 100 mg.
Timing	About 30–60 minutes before sexual activity (it can be taken 0.5 to 4 hours before).
Frequency	No more than once in 24 hours.
With food	Can be taken with or without food, but a heavy or high-fat meal can delay its effect.
How long it lasts	Effects commonly last around 4 hours, sometimes longer.

> **Do not** change the dose or combine it with other ED medicines on your own. Use the dose your doctor prescribed.

4. Who should NOT take it

Never take Viagra with nitrate medicines (for example nitroglycerin / glyceryl trinitrate, isosorbide mononitrate or dinitrate) or with “poppers” (amyl or butyl nitrite). The combination can cause a dangerous, sudden drop in blood pressure.

Tell your doctor before use if you:

- take **riociguat** (a medicine for pulmonary hypertension) – this combination is not allowed;
- take **alpha-blockers** or other blood pressure medicines, or have low blood pressure;
- have heart disease, recent heart attack or stroke, angina, or heart rhythm problems;
- have serious liver or kidney disease;
- have a condition affecting the penis (such as Peyronie’s disease) or a history of priapism, sickle cell disease, or leukemia;
- have an inherited eye disease such as retinitis pigmentosa, or have had vision loss in one eye (NAION);
- take medicines that raise sildenafil levels, such as certain antifungals, HIV protease inhibitors, or some antibiotics;
- are told by a doctor that sexual activity is not advisable for your heart condition.

Viagra is not intended for women or for children.

5. Possible side effects

How common	Examples
Common	Headache, facial flushing, indigestion, nasal congestion, dizziness.
Less common	Blurred vision, changes in color perception (blue tinge), sensitivity to light, back or muscle pain, rash.
Rare but serious	Erection lasting 4 hours or more, sudden vision loss, sudden hearing loss or ringing in the ears, chest pain, fainting, severe allergic reaction.

Get emergency medical help immediately if you have an erection lasting more than 4 hours, sudden loss of vision or hearing, chest pain during sexual activity, or signs of a severe allergic reaction (swelling of the face or throat, trouble breathing).

6. Practical tips

- **Get it from a licensed source.** Viagra is a prescription medicine in most countries. A doctor can check whether it is safe for you.
- **Alcohol** in large amounts can reduce its effect and increase dizziness and low blood pressure.
- **Grapefruit juice** may raise sildenafil levels in some people.
- **Be patient.** It needs sexual stimulation and often some time to work. A heavy meal can delay the effect.
- **Store** tablets at room temperature, in the original package, away from children.
- **Ask about the cause.** ED can be an early sign of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, low testosterone, or stress. A check-up is worthwhile.
- **Healthy habits help:** regular exercise, a balanced diet, quitting smoking, limiting alcohol, and good sleep can improve erectile function.

7. Counterfeit pills: a real risk

Fake “Viagra” and “herbal” ED products are widely sold online and in shops without a prescription. Health authorities have repeatedly found them to contain the wrong dose, no active ingredient, or hidden drugs, and sometimes harmful contaminants.

> **Safer approach:** buy only from a licensed pharmacy that requires a valid prescription, avoid unsolicited emails and “miracle” offers, and check the packaging and leaflet carefully.

8. Quick FAQ

Question	Answer
Does it increase desire?	No. It helps the physical response; it does not directly increase sexual desire.
How fast does it work?	Often within 30–60 minutes, but it varies.
Can I take it every day?	It is meant for use as needed, no more than once per day. Ask your doctor about any other regimen.
Is it addictive?	It is not physically addictive, but some people feel psychologically reliant on it.
Are there alternatives?	Yes: tadalafil, vardenafil, avanafil, as well as therapy, lifestyle changes, devices, and other treatments. Your doctor can advise.

Disclaimer: This guide is for general educational purposes and does not replace professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Dosing and safety information can differ by country and product. Always read the official patient information leaflet and talk with a doctor or pharmacist.