

Between the Sheets...

May 2021

This column provides the platform for experts in the field to help men and women by providing answers to questions about sexual health and intimacy challenges that can result from prostate cancer treatment.

This column was compiled with the help of Dr. Jeffrey Albaugh, PhD, APRN, CUCNS, Director of Sexual Health at NorthShore University HealthSystem and at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, IL. Dr. Albaugh is a board-certified advanced practice urology clinical nurse specialist, certified sexuality counselor and trained relationship counselor. He has completed Level 1 and 2 training from the Gottman Institute and has also trained with Andrew Christensen, PhD in Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy. In addition to his many publications in peer reviewed journals and chapters in books on sexual dysfunction, Dr. Albaugh published *Reclaiming Sex and Intimacy After Prostate Cancer Treatment*. He has been quoted in media and publications as an expert in the treatment of sexual dysfunction.

QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:

I don't notice much difference between generic sildenafil and Viagra. Is there a difference? Why can't I take more than 100mg?

RESPONSE FROM DR. JEFFREY ALBAUGH:

Thank you for your questions. Both generic sildenafil and Viagra contain the same chemical: sildenafil. They are the same chemical and should work equally in most men. I have worked with many men who have alternated between branded and generic sildenafil. Some of these men were taking both because insurance allows them a few a month and they use generics the rest of the time (due to the drastic cost difference). Men tell me all the time that they find no difference in the generic versus the branded version of sildenafil. Once in a while, a patient may complain about a particular side effect with one over the other and this is likely due to the other components of the pill (not the chemical of sildenafil, but the other substances in that particular pill). You should expect to get the same results with the generic versus the branded version of sildenafil. If you haven't used a discount coupon program like www.goodrx.com, it can be helpful in finding the lowest price at the pharmacies in your particular area. Sildenafil can cost as little as 30-50 cents a pill through those programs (versus up to about \$75 a pill in the past for branded pills). The same discount type programs can be used for other generic phosphodiesterase type 5 inhibitors (PDE-5i) with just as good of savings on generic tadalafil (the chemical of Cialis) and men find that generic tadalafil works as well as the branded medication.

It is not recommended that you take more than the highest FDA approved dose of sildenafil, which is 100mg. The studies done with sildenafil show the benefits most outweigh the risks if you stay within that maximum dose. Higher doses could lead to more side effects. The most concerning side effects are lowering of the blood pressure and, thereby, possibly raising the heart rate. Remember these PDE-5is were designed to lower the blood pressure, initially, and then were discovered to help with erections. They do slightly lower the blood pressure at the FDA approved doses, but may lower the blood pressure more substantially at higher doses. As the blood pressure is lowered, the heart rate may increase, which is again of concern. The same concerns would hold true for any of the other PDE-5is (tadalafil, vardenafil and avanafil). Remember dosing is different for these other medications. For example, tadalafil is dosed at 5-20mg, so the highest FDA approved dose of tadalafil is 20mg, and that would be equivalent to sildenafil 100mgs. In general, you should be careful not to drink 3 or more equivalent units of alcohol with PDE-5is as that may lower your blood pressure, and also will not help your erectile function. It is important to work carefully with your prescriber to make sure you safely use each of these medications, especially in regard to other medications you may take that may interact with these medications.

You can access the new edition of my book at www.drjeffalbaugh.com.

Watch Dr. Albaugh's presentation on sexual health and intimacy from the *Prostate Cancer Pathways for Patients and Caregivers* event recorded at NorthShore University HealthSystem in Skokie, IL on November 3, 2018 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hiq0dDEb1I0&t=4483s>.

Read previous issues of Between the Sheets at www.ustoo.org/BTS.

Do you have a question about sexual health or intimacy? If so, we invite you to send it to Us TOO. We'll select questions to feature in future *Between the Sheets* columns.

Please email your question to: ustooBTS@ustoo.org

Or mail your letter to:

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feature on sex and intimacy,
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