

Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

The Truth About Impotence Treatment Claims

Health fraud sells false hope. Whether fraud is packaged as exotic pills and potions, phony cures or “miracle” remedies, it thrives on wishful thinking, naivete, or desperation. Fraud wastes a consumer’s money, and in some cases, valuable time, especially when it causes a consumer to postpone proper treatment for a medical problem.

Recent advances in treating impotence have opened the floodgates for bogus remedies for this condition. Using the Internet and direct mail solicitations, unscrupulous businesses are capitalizing on the publicity and popularity surrounding a new medical product, exploiting consumers who are desperate for a cure. The fact of the matter: Impotence is a medical condition for which treatments are available from qualified practitioners. Don’t be too embarrassed to see your physician before you begin any treatment regimen.

When it comes to healthcare or medical products that promise results—especially those for impotence—the Federal Trade Commission offers these tips for evaluating claims you may want to believe, but shouldn’t.

- If the product is advertised as effective for treating impotence—and no physician’s prescription is necessary—forget it. It won’t cure the condition.
- If the product is advertised as a “breakthrough” in treating impotence, check with your doctor to see if it is legitimate.
- If the product is promoted by a “medical organization,” call your physician to check the credentials. Phony “clinics” and sham “institutes” are touting bogus cures for impotence.
- If the product says “scientifically proven” to reverse impotence in a high percentage of patients, check it out with your doctor. Some claims that “clinical studies” prove a product works are false; generally, high success rates should raise suspicions.
- If the product being pitched to cure impotence is “herbal” or “all natural,” dismiss it. To date, no “herbal” or “all natural” substance has been shown to be an effective treatment for impotence.

To report a fraudulent product for treating impotence, file a complaint with the FTC online at www.ftc.gov, write to the FTC Consumer Response Center (CRC), Washington, D.C. 20580, or call 202-FTC-HELP (382-4357), TDD (202) 326-2502. The Federal Trade Commission publishes free brochures on variety of consumer protection issues. For a complete list of publications, write or call the FTC for a copy of *Best Sellers*. You also can access FTC consumer and business publications online at www.ftc.gov.

For more information about impotence, write to the American Foundation for Urologic Disease, Inc., Sexual Function Health Council, 1128 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. You also can visit their web sites at www.afud.org, www.impotence.org, or www.iiem.org, or call their toll-free number at 1-800-242-2383.