

Erectile dysfunction may indicate an increased risk of heart disease

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A study published today suggests that older men affected by erectile dysfunction may have an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease. The authors of the study say it highlights the importance for men affected by the condition to discuss it with their GP.

Erectile dysfunction is the inability to achieve and maintain an erection for satisfactory [sexual performance](#). It is a very common condition, with some estimates of its prevalence as high as eight out of ten elderly men.

An international team of researchers led by Dr David Batty, a Wellcome Trust Career Development Fellow at University College London, studied a group of 6304 men aged between 55 and 88 years old.

Just over half of the men had reported [erectile dysfunction](#) at the start of the study. The researchers looked at whether those men affected by the condition had a higher risk of cardiovascular disease later in life. The results are published today in the 'Journal of the American College of Cardiology'.

During the course of a five-year follow-up of these men, there were 1579 cardiovascular disease events, such as stroke, [heart attack](#) and brain haemorrhage.

The researchers found that erectile dysfunction indicated an increased risk of cardiovascular disease of between a third and a half. While it is

unlikely that the condition itself causes cardiovascular disease, it is likely to be a marker of [cardiovascular disease risk](#).

"[Impotence](#) will affect most men at some stage in their lives and it can be distressing and often difficult to talk about," says Dr Batty. "It is important that men, particular in middle age, speak to their GPs if they are affected by the condition as it may be a symptom of a more serious underlying condition, such as cardiovascular disease. This will then allow doctors to conduct further tests and perhaps prescribe appropriate medication and lifestyle changes."

More information: Batty GD et al. Erectile dysfunction and later cardiovascular disease in men With type 2 diabetes. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 2010 22 Nov [epub ahead of print].

Provided by Wellcome Trust

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