

# No More Man-o-pause!

DR SRIRAM NARAYANAN, a senior consultant vascular and endovascular surgeon at Harley Street Heart and Vascular Centre, explains how corporate life can impact your intimate life.



Heavy responsibilities, frequent travel, business dinners and late nights waiting for Wall Street numbers – the corporate executive can be driven by the exciting business environment in Singapore, but often at the cost of his own health.

The impact of this high-speed, high-stress environment on circulation is insidious but real. We all age – the 40s and 50s bring lower testosterone levels, decreased ability to break down fats, and resistance to insulin that controls our blood sugar. Stress as well as poor eating, exercise and sleep routines accelerate this process exponentially. As the bank account grows, so do cholesterol and calcium deposits in your arteries. Even your friendly neighbourhood vascular surgeon is not immune!

## Heart ache and the softer man

The carrying of well oxygenated, nutrition-rich blood to all your organs by the arteries plays an important role in your circulation. However, when cholesterol and calcium deposits narrow these vessels, blood flow reduces, leading to heart attacks, strokes, decreased ability to exercise and even erectile dysfunction; indeed, over two-thirds of all erectile problems are related to problems in the circulation.

Despite this, health screenings typically focus on heart health, strokes or cancer only. Given the role that circulation plays, all of it should be assessed as a whole. This is particularly true as apparently unrelated symptoms like the loss of early morning erections could point to underlying silent heart disease, pre-diabetes or undiagnosed hypertension from stress.

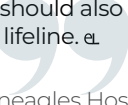
## Nitric oxide, a master conductor

In 1998, American physician-scientist Ferid Murad, along with two colleagues, received the Nobel Prize in Medicine for discovering the simple molecule nitric oxide as a signalling molecule throughout the cardiovascular system. This paved the way for the "blue pills" that enhance nitric oxide action. Produced in the inner lining of blood vessels (and elsewhere in the body), nitric oxide acts as the conductor of the circulation orchestra. It dilates blood vessels and so allows more blood to flow into tissues the instant it is needed. It's also essential for repairing blood vessels, preventing artery hardening, and essentially maintaining a healthy circulation.

In men, nitric oxide is dependent on testosterone to function properly. Decreasing testosterone levels with age and stress means this function is impaired, while smoking and diabetes blow nitric oxide action out of the water. For corporate high-flyers, this combination often leads to poor erections as blood flow to the sex organ decreases. Poor repair of blood vessel damage caused by cholesterol and calcium deposits can lead to heart attacks and strokes. Conversely, a strong erection indicates a strong heart.

## Reversing the damage

Maintaining a healthy circulation is key not just to an energetic body, but also a happy mind – as those with active intimate lives can attest to. Blocked arteries are bad for the heart and bad for sexual performance. Luckily, it's possible to reverse some of the damage caused to the circulation by a demanding corporate life without resorting to procedures or medication, thanks to the reparative power of nitric oxide. Exercise is a huge nitric oxide booster. And yes, the levels can be enhanced with supplements of the amino acids Arginine and L-Carnitine.

Screening for circulation health in male corporate executives should therefore encompass the whole picture: heart and brain arteries, limb circulation, responses to exercise, testosterone and yes, the erection too – those who work hard should also be able to play hard. After all, your circulation is your lifeline. 

Harley Street Heart and Vascular Centre (Gleneagles Hospital)  
#02-38/41, Annexe Block, 6a Napier Road  
6472 3703 | harleystreet.sg