What is ejaculation?
Ejaculation is the release of semen from
the penis at orgasm (sexual climax).
When a man is sexually stimulated, the
brain sends signals to the genital area
through nerves in the spinal cord to
make the pelvic muscles contract.
At orgasm, waves of muscle
contractions transport the sperm,
with a small amount of fluid, from the
testes through to the vas deferens. The
seminal vesicles and prostate contribute
extra fluid to protect the sperm.
This mixture of sperm and fluid
(semen) travels along the urethra
to the tip of the penis where it is
ejaculated (released).

What is premature ejaculation?
Premature ejaculation happens when a
man is unable to control the timing of
ejaculation, and ejaculates before he
and/or his partner feels ready for this to
happen, and this causes distress.

How soon is too soon when a
man prematurely ejaculates?
For a heterosexual man, a commonly
used definition of premature
ejaculation is ejaculating within about
one minute of his penis entering the
woman's vagina. However, there is no
fixed time for 'too soon.' Premature
ejaculation is a loss of control over
ejaculation, and the distress it can
cause to one or both partners, not just
the time it takes a man to ejaculate.

How common is premature
ejaculation?
Premature ejaculation is the most
common male sexual problem and
affects men of all ages.
Premature ejaculation is more common
in younger men. This is because
ejaculation generally takes longer as
men get older and younger men may
be less sexually experienced or feel less
secure with the situation in which they
are having sex.

What causes premature
ejaculation?
The cause of premature ejaculation
depends on whether the premature
ejaculation is lifelong or acquired.
Lifelong premature ejaculation can
be caused by a chemical imbalance in
important brain centres that lowers
the threshold for ejaculation. As these
men need less stimulation, ejaculation
can happen sooner than desired.
Psychological problems, including
performance anxiety, may be secondary
to lifelong premature ejaculation rather
than being the primary cause.
Acquired premature ejaculation is
often caused by performance anxiety.
The anxiety can be about sexual
performance, fear of being caught in a
sexual act or anxiety related to a specific
situation, such as a new relationship.
Some religious beliefs may also make a
man feel anxious about having sex.
Acquired premature ejaculation can also
be caused by problems such as erectile
dysfunction. This may be because of the
need for intense stimulation to get and
maintain an erection or from anxiety
about the erection problem.

How is premature ejaculation
diagnosed?
There are no tests for premature
ejaculation as it is a self-reported
diagnosis. Your local doctor (GP) can
help in the diagnosis and treatment of
premature ejaculation.
The doctor will ask questions about sexual history, including how long the premature ejaculation has been happening and when it first happened and, based on this, will talk about the possible causes.

**How is premature ejaculation treated?**

Treatment for premature ejaculation is usually based on the man’s relationship status and the cause of the condition (whether it is lifelong or acquired).

There are several treatments available for premature ejaculation including sex therapy, behavioural techniques, gels to reduce penile sensation, oral medicines and erectile dysfunction treatments (if erectile dysfunction is also a problem).

Your doctor may refer you to a specialist, such as a sex therapist, a urologist or an endocrinologist.

**What is sex therapy?**

Counselling with an experienced sex therapist may be very helpful in treating anxiety in men with either lifelong or acquired premature ejaculation. Counselling can help to identify any underlying sexual or relationship issues with the opportunity for open discussion.

**What are behavioural techniques?**

Semans’ “stop-start” technique involves the man telling his partner to stop stimulation when he feels he is close to ejaculation. When the feeling has passed, stimulation can be started again. These steps of stopping and starting can be repeated as needed.

Masters and Johnson’s “squeeze” technique involves squeezing the end of the penis for several seconds just before ejaculation, to lessen the urge to ejaculate. This is repeated until the man and his partner are ready for ejaculation to happen. This technique can help teach a man to control ejaculation.

**How can a man reduce penile sensation?**

Local anaesthetic gels and creams can reduce penile sensation and should be applied up to 30 minutes before sexual intercourse; using a condom will prevent absorption of the gel or cream by the partner.

Using two condoms may also reduce sensation and help a man take longer to ejaculate.

**What are the oral medicines?**

Some antidepressants — tricyclic antidepressants and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) — have the side-effect of delayed ejaculation and are now commonly prescribed by doctors for premature ejaculation.

Dapoxetine (Priligy®) is the only SSRI that has been approved as a specific treatment for premature ejaculation (in men 18-64 years old) in Australia. It is taken “on-demand” rather than daily; 30 mg doses are taken one to three hours before intercourse.

The tricyclic antidepressant (clomipramine) has been shown to work better than SSRIs (fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline) in some men. These drugs work only for as long as the man continues to take the medication daily.

Taking SSRIs can have some side-effects such as decreased libido (sex drive), nausea, sweating, bowel disturbance and fatigue.

**What are the erectile dysfunction treatments?**

If a man has erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation, treating the erectile problems first can help bring back normal control of ejaculation. Treatments for erectile dysfunction are commonly oral medications, including Viagra®, Cialis® and Levitra®. Other treatments include vacuum devices, penile injections and penile prostheses.

**What role do partners play in the treatment of premature ejaculation?**

If a man is in a relationship, both the man and his sexual partner can be affected by premature ejaculation. Partners can give valuable support and help decide the best treatment option, and it is helpful to involve your partner when talking with your doctor.

**Can premature ejaculation cause infertility?**

Premature ejaculation does not usually cause infertility (in a couple), although sometimes it can cause problems for couples trying to become pregnant.

Many men who have premature ejaculation feel embarrassed when ejaculation happens before vaginal penetration. If this is the case, a doctor may use a treatment to delay ejaculation or refer the couple to a fertility specialist.

**How can premature ejaculation affect men?**

Premature ejaculation can cause embarrassment and anxiety, and men often feel more anxious when they try to find ways to manage the problem. Partners of men with premature ejaculation may find it difficult to deal with their partner’s anxiety.

**Having an emotional response to premature ejaculation is quite normal and discussing these feelings with your partner and/or doctor can help.**

**What are the erectile dysfunction treatments?**

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