

# Talking to customers about erection problems

SUPPORTING MEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Sildenafil

This workbook will refresh your knowledge about erection problems (EPs) and the range of customers they affect. It offers tips on having successful conversations and includes different learning activities to try.

## Did you know?

Pharmacy has already enabled over **1 million men** with erection problems to take action since 2018 through the supply of VIAGRA CONNECT®<sup>1</sup>, showing your role in supporting men's health and wellbeing. Around **6 million men** in the UK are affected by erection problems,\*<sup>2</sup> so there are likely to be more customers that you can help.



## Recommending VIAGRA CONNECT

Many men occasionally fail to get or keep an erection – contributing lifestyle factors include stress, anxiety, lack of sleep, unhealthy diet, drinking too much alcohol or recreational drug use.<sup>3,4</sup>

### Main causes include:

- Physical – changes in the blood flow to the penis can result from cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol or diabetes, for example
- Psychological – e.g. depression, performance anxiety, work-related stress
- A side effect of a medicine they are taking – e.g. antidepressants, diuretics. This is why it's vital to capture whether other medicines are being taken when completing the Pharmacy Checklist and refer customers with medical conditions to the pharmacist.

VIAGRA CONNECT may be used by men over 18 years old who have difficulty getting or keeping an erection for satisfactory sexual intercourse. It may be an occasional occurrence, or something that happens more frequently.



- For men over 18 affected by erectile dysfunction (ED)
- Sildenafil works to improve the blood flow in the penis. Sexual stimulation is needed for it to work

**Dose:** Maximum dose 1 tablet daily, taken approximately an hour before sexual activity.

## Knowledge refresh

### 1. Which of the following can interact with sildenafil?

- Grapefruit juice
- Orange juice
- Kale
- Milk

### 2. Are the following statements about sildenafil true or false?

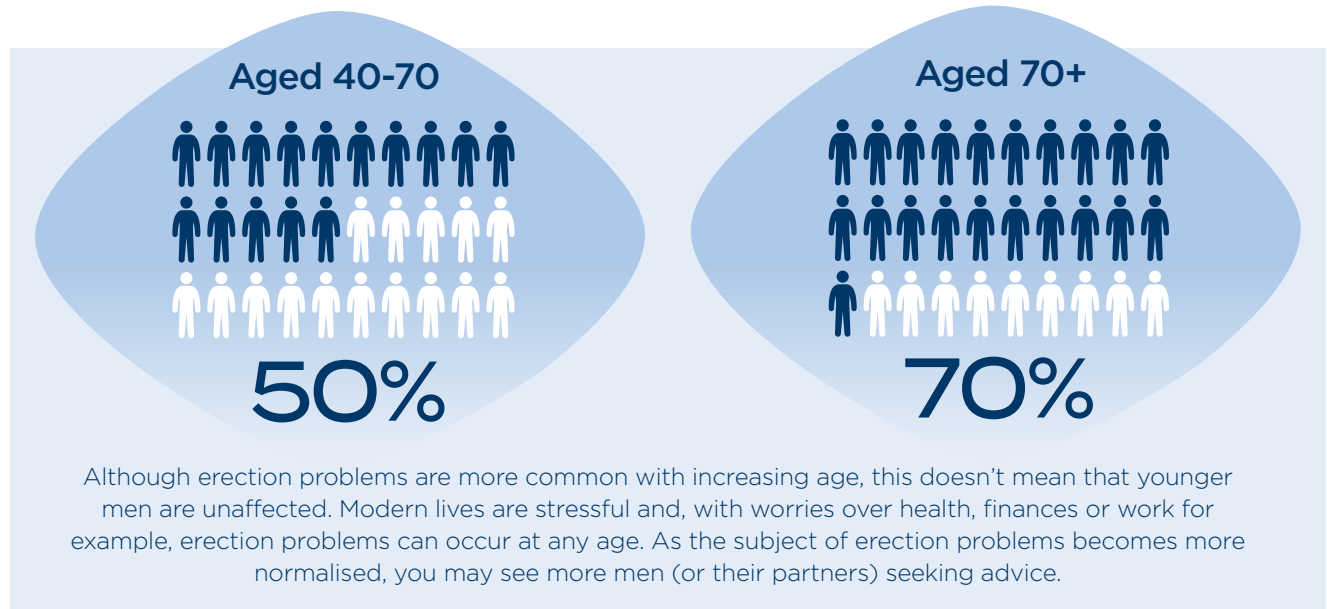
- Can be taken with/without food, but a high-fat meal may increase the time it takes to work
- Drinking excess alcohol may make the product less effective

You will find the answers to these questions on the back page.

\*Men reporting occasional and frequent difficulty getting or maintaining an erection

# Understanding your customers

Erection problems are estimated to affect half of men aged 40-70, rising to 70% for men over 70.<sup>5</sup>



## How do they feel?

Erection problems may be common but that doesn't lessen the impact they can have on a man's confidence and relationships. Men might think that the ability to get an erection is a direct reflection of their masculinity, rather than perhaps as a result of their lifestyle. They may feel frustrated, anxious, depressed or start to lose self-esteem and confidence. Partners may feel rejected, unattractive or guilty. Problems with a couple's sex life can have knock-on effects on other areas of their relationship.

## Consultation tips

Having VIAGRA CONNECT available to men through pharmacy is a real benefit. Not only is it easily accessible but men can also benefit from your additional advice and awareness of red flags. Having consultations that put customers at ease, reassure them and maintain their dignity and confidentiality are important in the pharmacy setting.

**NOTE:** Be aware that although you may be used to discussing erection problems, your customer might not be. Always offer the option of using the consultation room or moving to a discrete space for a chat.

**Go and do**



To deepen your understanding of how erection problems can affect men and their relationships, watch the video to hear about Louis and Joanne's story:  
[www.tmmagazine.co.uk/viagraconnect-learning](http://www.tmmagazine.co.uk/viagraconnect-learning)


**Go and do**



You can watch a 2-minute video where pharmacy assistant Jenny took steps to improve her confidence in speaking to men about erection problems. Take a look here:  
[www.tmmagazine.co.uk/viagraconnect-learning](http://www.tmmagazine.co.uk/viagraconnect-learning)

## Team discussion

Share ideas with colleagues about having conversations with men purchasing VIAGRA CONNECT. Consider the language health professionals use compared with the terms that customers may use. Think back to a time you have been a patient yourself – what kind of phrases helped put you at ease? Is there any wording on the packaging that could be useful?



# Consultation process

## Reflection



### Think about the following questions:

1. What is your pharmacy's process/SOP for selling VIAGRA CONNECT?
2. What role do pharmacy assistants and team members have in the consultation process and who guides the Pharmacy Checklist completion?

**NOTE:** If you are not sure, ask your pharmacist whether your pharmacy has any specific SOPs or protocols for recommending and selling VIAGRA CONNECT.



The basic structure of the consultation could look something like this:

### Check whether this is a repeat purchase or a first-time purchase

Your pharmacist may want to deal personally with customers who are asking about using VIAGRA CONNECT for the first time, or may delegate the Pharmacy Checklist completion to pharmacy team members.

#### Repeat purchase

Introduce yourself, and the role that your pharmacist will have. Explain that you'll be going through a few key questions, and then the pharmacist will come and speak to them. Have the Pharmacy Checklist to hand if needed.

**Q:** How long has it been since you last purchased this product?

**Q:** Have you seen your GP since you started using this product?

**Q:** Have there been any changes to your health since you last purchased VIAGRA CONNECT?

**Q:** Do you still feel fit enough to climb a couple of flights of stairs? (This question helps assess fitness)

**Q:** Have there been any changes in the medication you are taking since last supply? (If supply was some time ago, it may be beneficial to go through the Pharmacy Checklist to make sure)

**Q:** Have you had any problems or side-effects when using this before?

#### First-time purchase

Introduce yourself, and the role that your pharmacist will have, and explain why you need to go through some questions using a Pharmacy Checklist.

You need to clarify that the customer is affected by erection problems, and not another issue, such as premature ejaculation. This can be done by checking their symptoms. If you are not sure of the difference, talk to your pharmacist.

Take them through the Pharmacy Checklist, noting down their responses to all the questions.

Consult with the pharmacist, who may want to continue the consultation from this point.

**With repeat supply**, if nothing has changed in terms of the man's medication or medical history, you may sell the product after discrete authorisation from the pharmacist. The customer should be reminded to see his GP within 6 months of the initial supply of VIAGRA CONNECT if he hasn't already.



The information below is on the second page of the Pharmacy Checklist and is a useful reminder of what to cover when supplying VIAGRA CONNECT.

Check your customer knows how to use VIAGRA CONNECT. The dose is a 50mg tablet, once daily, to be taken approximately an hour before intended intercourse.

Remind them to see their GP for a follow up within 6 months of first purchasing VIAGRA CONNECT.

Encourage all customers to read the leaflet carefully and stop taking it if they notice any side-effects such as chest pains, persistent/painful erection, sudden decrease/loss of vision, allergic reaction, skin reactions, seizures/fits.

Common side-effects that they may experience include headaches and nausea, but if they have any concerns they should speak to the pharmacist or their GP.



## Lifestyle advice

This is an opportunity to give additional lifestyle advice as appropriate:



**Lose weight**



**Give up smoking**



**Cut back on alcohol/  
recreational drug use**



**Exercise regularly**



**Reduce stress**



## Ideas to make your pharmacy man-friendly

Be aware of customers who are browsing, appearing to be waiting for the pharmacist to be free and be proactive in approaching them



Have a specific men's health/grooming section - e.g. include food supplements, skincare, shaving accessories and healthcare designed for men



Make the most of leaflets and point of sale supplied by VIAGRA CONNECT that men can use to start a conversation. Have some in your men's health section and put some at the counter, for example




Run men's health campaigns - these could tie in with national events or other health campaigns, such as men's health week in June or November in November



# Self-test


In each of the below, which of the statements from the customer would indicate that VIAGRA CONNECT **IS NOT SUITABLE FOR HIM**? Tick **all that apply** and go through any queries with your pharmacist. Refer to the Pharmacy Checklist if you're not sure.

**Patrick, 55**



- a. He can't ejaculate any more when he has sex
- b. He takes aspirin and atenolol (a beta-blocker)
- c. He goes for a long walk every day at a brisk pace

**Ian, 35**



- a. He sometimes can't get an erection as he gets really nervous with a new partner
- b. He has type 2 diabetes and takes metformin
- c. He has a stomach ulcer and takes omeprazole

**Tony, 61**



- a. He has been having problems getting an erection for a couple of years, but particularly since stopping work and putting on weight
- b. He does get out of breath rushing for a bus (brisk walking pace)
- c. He takes tamsulosin for his prostate

**Further resources**

**Take a look online for a whole host of additional support materials from VIAGRA CONNECT.**

From videos and scenarios to more in-depth learning and a copy of the Pharmacy Checklist, there are learning materials suitable for the whole pharmacy team.



With a **big new consumer campaign** planned for this summer, this training will help make sure you and your team are ready to handle increased requests for VIAGRA CONNECT.

[tmmagazine.co.uk/viagraconnect-learning](http://tmmagazine.co.uk/viagraconnect-learning)

[hcp.viagraconnect.co.uk](http://hcp.viagraconnect.co.uk)

**References**

1. Kantar 2019, Viagra Connect Omnibus Survey, 1,499 men 35+ yrs & UK male population 35+ yrs (data on file)
  2. IPSOS Healthcare KPI Tracking study: February 2022 (Data on file)
  3. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/erection-problems-erectile-dysfunction/>
  4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4291878/>
  5. <https://patient.info/mens-health/erectile-dysfunction-impotence>
- Online references last accessed January 2023.



## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**Name of product:** VIAGRA CONNECT® 50 mg Film-coated Tablets **Active ingredient:** Sildenafil **Product licence number:** PL 50622/0063 **Name and address of the product licence holder:** Upjohn UK Limited, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich, Kent, CT13 9NJ, UK **Supply classification:** P **Indications:** For erectile dysfunction in adult men. **Side Effects:** The safety profile of VIAGRA is based on > 9,000 patients in > 70 double-blind placebo controlled clinical studies. The most commonly reported adverse reactions in clinical studies among sildenafil treated patients were headache, flushing, dyspepsia, nasal congestion, dizziness, nausea, hot flush, visual disturbance, cyanopsia and vision blurred. Adverse reactions from post marketing surveillance has been gathered covering an estimated period >10 years. Because not all adverse reactions are reported to the Marketing Authorisation Holder and included in the safety database, the frequencies of these reactions cannot be reliably determined. Very Common (≥ 1/10): Headache. Common (≥ 1/100 and <1/10): Dizziness, Visual colour distortions (Chloropsia, Chromatopsia, Cyanopsia, Erythropsia and Xanthopsia), Visual disturbance, Vision blurred, Flushing, Hot flush, Nasal congestion, Nausea, Dyspepsia. Uncommon (≥ 1/1,000 and <1/100): Rhinitis, Hypersensitivity; Somnolence; Hypoaesthesia, Lacrimation disorders (Dry eye, Lacrimal disorder and Lacrimation increased), Eye pain, Photophobia, Photopsia, Ocular hyperaemia, Visual brightness, Conjunctivitis, Vertigo, Tinnitus, Tachycardia, Palpitations, Hypertension, Hypotension, Epistaxis, Sinus congestion, Gastro Oesophageal reflux disease, Vomiting, Abdominal pain upper, Dry mouth, Rash, Myalgia, Pain in extremity, Haematuria, Chest pain, Fatigue, Feeling hot, Heart rate increased. Rare (≥ 1/10,000 and <1/1,000): Cerebrovascular accident, Transient ischaemic attack, Seizure, Seizure recurrence, Syncope, Non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy (NAION), Retinal vascular occlusion, Retinal haemorrhage, Arteriosclerotic retinopathy, Retinal disorder, Glaucoma, Visual field defect, Diplopia, Visual acuity reduced, Myopia, Asthenopia, Vitreous floaters, Iris disorder, Mydriasis, Halo vision, Eye oedema, Eye swelling, Eye disorder, Conjunctival hyperaemia, Eye irritation, Abnormal sensation in eye, Eyelid oedema, Scleral discoloration, Deafness, Sudden cardiac death, Myocardial infarction, Ventricular arrhythmia, Atrial fibrillation, Unstable angina, Throat tightness, Nasal oedema, Nasal dryness, Hypoaesthesia oral, Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS), Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN), Penile haemorrhage, Priapism, Haematospermia, Erection increased, Irritability **Precautions:** Erectile dysfunction can be associated with a number of contributing conditions, e.g. hypertension, diabetes mellitus, hypercholesterolaemia or cardiovascular disease. As a result, all men with erectile dysfunction should be advised to consult their doctor within 6 months for a clinical review of potential underlying conditions and risk factors associated with erectile dysfunction (ED). If symptoms of ED have not improved after taking VIAGRA CONNECT on several consecutive occasions, or if their erectile dysfunction worsens, the patient should be advised to consult their doctor. **Cardiovascular risk factors:** Since there is a degree of cardiac risk associated with sexual activity, the cardiovascular status of men should be considered prior to initiation of therapy. Agents for the treatment of erectile dysfunction, including sildenafil, are not recommended to be used by those men who with light or moderate physical activity, such as walking briskly for 20 minutes or climbing 2 flights of stairs, feel very breathless or experience chest pain. The following patients are considered at low cardiovascular risk from sexual activity: patients who have been successfully revascularised (e.g. via coronary artery bypass grafting, stenting, or angioplasty), patients with asymptomatic controlled hypertension, and those with mild valvular disease. These patients may be suitable for treatment but should consult a doctor before resuming sexual activity. Patients previously diagnosed with the following must be advised to consult with their doctor before resuming sexual activity: uncontrolled hypertension, moderate to severe valvular disease, left ventricular dysfunction, hypertrophic obstructive and other cardiomyopathies, or significant arrhythmias. Sildenafil has vasodilator properties, resulting in mild and transient decreases in blood pressure. Patients with increased susceptibility to vasodilators include those with left ventricular outflow obstruction (e.g. aortic stenosis), or those with the rare syndrome of multiple system atrophy manifesting as severely impaired autonomic control of blood pressure. Men with these conditions must not use the product without consulting a doctor. Sildenafil potentiates the hypotensive effect of nitrates (see **Contra-indications**). Serious cardiovascular events, including myocardial infarction, unstable angina, sudden cardiac death, ventricular arrhythmia, cerebrovascular haemorrhage, transient ischaemic attack, hypertension and hypotension have been reported post-marketing in temporal association with the use of sildenafil. Most, but not all, of these patients had pre-existing cardiovascular risk factors. Many events were reported to occur during or shortly after sexual intercourse and a few were reported to occur shortly after the use of sildenafil without sexual activity. It is not possible to determine whether these events are related directly to these factors or to other factors. **Priapism:** Patients who have conditions which may predispose them to priapism (such as sickle cell anaemia, multiple myeloma or leukaemia), should consult a doctor before using agents for the treatment of erectile dysfunction, including sildenafil. Prolonged erections and priapism have been occasionally reported with sildenafil in post-marketing experience. In the event of an erection that persists longer than 4 hours, the patient should seek immediate medical assistance. If priapism is not treated immediately, penile tissue damage and permanent loss of potency could result. Concomitant use with other treatments for erectile dysfunction: The safety and efficacy of combinations of sildenafil with other treatments for erectile dysfunction have not been studied. Therefore the use of such combinations is not recommended. Effects on vision: Cases of visual defects have been reported spontaneously in connection with the intake of sildenafil and other PDE5 inhibitors (see **Side Effects**). Cases of non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy, a rare condition, have been reported spontaneously and in an observational study in connection with the intake of sildenafil and other PDE5 inhibitors (see **Side Effects**). Patients should be advised that in the event of any sudden visual defect, they should stop taking VIAGRA CONNECT and consult a physician immediately (see **Contra-indications**). Concomitant use with CYP3A4 inhibitors: Pharmacokinetic analysis of clinical trial data indicated a reduction in sildenafil clearance when co-administered with CYP3A4 inhibitors (such as ketoconazole, itraconazole, erythromycin, cimetidine). Although, no increased incidence of adverse events was observed in these patients, they should be advised to consult a doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT as a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them (see **Precautions**). Concomitant use with alpha-blockers: Caution is advised when sildenafil is administered to patients taking an alpha-blocker, as the co-administration may lead to symptomatic hypotension in a few susceptible individuals (see **Precautions**). This is most likely to occur within 4 hours post sildenafil dosing. In order to minimise the potential for developing postural hypotension, patients should be haemodynamically stable on alpha-blocker therapy prior to initiating sildenafil treatment. Thus, patients taking alpha blockers should be advised to consult their doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT as a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them. Treatment should be stopped if symptoms of postural hypotension occur, and patients should seek advice from their doctor on what to do. Effect on bleeding: Studies with human platelets indicate that sildenafil potentiates the antiaggregatory effect of sodium nitroprusside in vitro. There is no safety information on the administration of sildenafil to patients with bleeding disorders or active peptic ulceration. Therefore the use of sildenafil is not recommended in those patients with history of bleeding disorders or active peptic ulceration, and should only be administered after consultation with a doctor. Hepatic impairment: Patients with hepatic impairment must be advised to consult their doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT, since a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them (see **Dosage and Method of use**). Renal impairment: Patients with severe renal impairment (creatinine clearance <30 mL/min), must be advised to consult their doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT, since a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them (see **Dosage and Method of use**). Lactose: The film coating of the tablet contains lactose. VIAGRA CONNECT should not be administered to men with rare hereditary problems of galactose intolerance, total lactase deficiency or glucose-galactose malabsorption. Sodium: This medicinal product contains less than 1 mmol sodium (23 mg) per tablet. Patients on low sodium diets can be informed that this medicinal product is essentially 'sodium-free'. Use with alcohol: Drinking excessive alcohol can temporarily reduce a man's ability to get an erection. Men should be advised not to drink large amounts of alcohol before sexual activity. **Contra-indications:** Hypersensitivity to the active substance or to any of the excipients listed in section 6.1. Consistent with its known effects on the nitric oxide/cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP) pathway, sildenafil was shown to potentiate the hypotensive effects of nitrates, and its co-administration with nitric oxide donors (such as amyl nitrite) or nitrates in any form is therefore contraindicated. Co-administration of VIAGRA CONNECT with ritonavir (a highly potent P450 enzyme inhibitor) is contraindicated (see **Precautions**). The co-administration of phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5) inhibitors, including sildenafil, with guanylate cyclase stimulators, such as riociguat, is contraindicated as it may potentially lead to symptomatic hypotension (see **Precautions**). Agents for the treatment of erectile dysfunction, including sildenafil, should not be used by those men for whom sexual activity may be inadvisable, and these patients should be referred to their doctor. This includes patients with severe cardiovascular disorders such as a recent (6 months) acute myocardial infarction (AMI) or stroke, unstable angina or severe cardiac failure. Sildenafil should not be used in patients with severe hepatic impairment, hypotension (blood pressure < 90/50 mmHg) and known hereditary degenerative retinal disorders such as retinitis pigmentosa (a minority of these patients have genetic disorders of retinal phosphodiesterase). This is because the safety of sildenafil has not been studied in these sub-groups of patients, and its use is therefore contraindicated. Sildenafil is contraindicated in patients who have loss of vision in one eye because of non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy (NAION), regardless of whether this episode was in connection or not with previous PDE5 inhibitor exposure. VIAGRA CONNECT should not be used in patients with anatomical deformation of the penis (such as angulation, cavernosal fibrosis or Peyronie's disease). VIAGRA CONNECT is not indicated for use by women. The product is not intended for men without erectile dysfunction. This product is not intended for men under 18 years of age. **Dosage and Method of use:** For Oral Use: Adults: The recommended dose is one 50 mg tablet taken with water approximately one hour before sexual activity. The maximum recommended dosing frequency is once per day. If VIAGRA CONNECT is taken with food, the onset of activity may be delayed compared to the fasted state. Patients should be advised that they may need to take VIAGRA CONNECT a number of times on different occasions (a maximum of one 50 mg tablet per day), before they can achieve a penile erection satisfactory for sexual activity. If after several attempts on different dosing occasions patients are still not able to achieve a penile erection sufficient for satisfactory sexual activity, they should be advised to consult a doctor. Elderly: Dosage adjustments are not required in elderly patients (≥ 65 years old). Renal Impairment: No dosage adjustments are required for patients with mild to moderate renal impairment. However, since sildenafil clearance is reduced in individuals with severe renal impairment (creatinine clearance <30mL/min), individuals previously diagnosed with severe renal impairment must be advised to consult their doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT, since a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them (see **Precautions**). Hepatic Impairment: Sildenafil clearance is reduced in individuals with hepatic impairment (e.g. cirrhosis). Individuals previously diagnosed with mild to moderate hepatic impairment must be advised to consult their doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT, since a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them (see **Precautions**). The safety of sildenafil has not been studied in patients with severe hepatic impairment, and its use is therefore contraindicated (see **Contra-indications**). Paediatric population: VIAGRA CONNECT is not indicated for individuals below 18 years of age. Use in patients taking other medicinal products: Pharmacokinetic analysis of clinical trial data indicated a reduction in sildenafil clearance when co-administered with CYP3A4 inhibitors (such as ritonavir, ketoconazole, itraconazole, erythromycin, cimetidine). With the exception of ritonavir, for which co-administration with sildenafil is contraindicated (see **Contra-indications**), individuals receiving concomitant treatment with CYP3A4 inhibitors must be advised to consult their doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT, since a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them (see **Precautions**). In order to minimise the potential of developing postural hypotension in patients receiving alpha blocker treatment (e.g. alfuzosin, doxazosin or tamsulosin), patients should be stabilised on alpha blocker therapy prior to initiating sildenafil treatment. Thus, patients taking alpha blockers must be advised to consult their doctor before taking VIAGRA CONNECT since a 25 mg tablet may be more suitable for them (see **Precautions**). Addition of a single dose of sildenafil to sacubitril/valsartan at steady state in patients with hypertension was associated with a significantly greater blood pressure reduction compared to administration of sacubitril/valsartan alone. Therefore, caution should be exercised when sildenafil is initiated in patients treated with sacubitril/valsartan. **C+D Trade Price (exc VAT)** 2 pack £8.82, 4 pack £16.17 and 8 pack £28.39 **Date of revision:** 04/2023

**Please continue to report suspected adverse drug reactions with any medicine or vaccine to the MHRA through the Yellow Card Scheme. It is easiest and quickest to report adverse drug reactions online via the Yellow Card website: <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/> or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store. Alternatively, you can report via some clinical IT systems (EMIS/SystemOne/Vision/MiDatabank) or by calling the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) free phone line: 0800-731-6789. Adverse reactions/events should also be reported to MAH at e-mail address: [pv.uk@viatris.com](mailto:pv.uk@viatris.com).**

The SmPC for this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications, and method of use can be found at: <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Medicinesinformation/SPCandPLs/index.htm> and from Viatris Medical Information, Building 4, Trident Place, Hatfield Business Park, Mosquito Way, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9UL, phone no. 01707 853000, Email: [info.uk@viatris.com](mailto:info.uk@viatris.com)

### Answers to Knowledge Refresh questions:

1. a; 2. Both statements are true

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