

A phosphodiesterase type 5 inhibitor (PDE5 inhibitor) is a vasodilating drug which works by blocking the degradative action of cGMP-specific phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5) on cyclic GMP in the smooth muscle cells lining the blood vessels supplying various tissues. These drugs dilate the corpora cavernosa of the penis, facilitating erection with sexual stimulation, and are used in the treatment of erectile dysfunction (ED). Sildenafil was the first effective oral treatment available for ED. Because PDE5 is also present in the smooth muscle of the walls of the arterioles within the lungs, sildenafil and tadalafil are FDA-approved for the treatment of pulmonary hypertension. As of 2019, the wider cardiovascular benefits of PDE5 inhibitors are being appreciated.

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