

Study: Viagra reduces heart stress

October 25 2005

Johns Hopkins University scientists say they've found Viagra is effective in reducing stress on one's heart by half.

The Baltimore researchers said while Viagra, sildenafil citrate, is more widely known for helping genital blood vessels expand to maintain an erection and, more recently, as a treatment for pulmonary hypertension, it has been thought to have little direct effect on the human heart.

The recent study suggests sildenafil blunts the strengthened heart beat caused by chemically induced stress, thereby lessening the excess amount of blood and force used to pump it to the body, according to study senior author Dr. David Kass, a Johns Hopkins cardiology professor.

The findings, which appear in the online journal *Circulation*, are believed to be the first confirmation in humans that sildenafil has a direct effect on the heart. Previous research by Kass and his team showed sildenafil had such effects in mice. Related research by the group also showed sildenafil prevents and reverses long-term effects in the heart from chronic high blood pressure.

Kass said his latest study confirms sildenafil helps control heart function only when the heart is under duress, but has little impact under normal conditions.

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Citation: Study: Viagra reduces heart stress (2005, October 25) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-10-viagra-heart-stress.html>

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