

Merck's Miracle Drug Propecia Linked to Permanent Sexual Side Effects

When the hair-loss prevention drug Propecia was released by Merck in December 1997, it was hailed as a miracle drug, providing an effective tool against male-pattern baldness that didn't require a messy topical cream. Unfortunately for some Propecia users, stopping a receding hairline came at the expensive of their sexual health, which has now caused a number of mass tort and product liability law firms to begin filing lawsuits against the manufacturer of Propecia.

[Michael E. Schmidt](#), Managing Partner of [Schmidt & Clark, LLP](#), has noticed and alarming number of inquiries to the firm related to Propecia. Mr. Schmidt stated, "Our firm has substantial expertise in the area of product liability litigation. As a result, we have received a number of inquiries from Propecia users."

In a 2011 [study](#) by Dr. Michael Irwig of George Washington University, 71 regular Propecia users were surveyed. Of these patients, 94 percent suffered low libido, 92 percent experienced erectile dysfunction and 92 percent experienced decreased sexual arousal.

One man suffering from the effects of finasteride, the active ingredient in Propecia suffers from low testosterone, likely causing his low sex drive, difficulty maintaining erection and change in ejaculation.

"I'll be on hormone therapy for the rest of my life because of Propecia," he said.

[Finasteride](#) is a 5-alpha reductase inhibitor, which works by blocking testosterone from converting into DHT, which thins hair and causes baldness. Finasteride can also be used to shrink enlarged prostates, and is sold under the brand name Proscar.

The drug's manufacturer, Merck warned that a small percentage of Propecia users — about 1.3 percent — experienced erectile dysfunction and decreased libido, but these symptoms often went away after discontinuing the drug.

However, Irwig's study suggests that some side effects could last up to an average of 40 months after the last dose, suggesting Merck may have underestimated the lasting-nature of the symptoms.

While Merck expanded the warning on Swedish and Italian drug labels in early 2010 to include "persistence of erectile dysfunction after discontinuation," nothing about the lasting sexual side effects appeared on U.S. labels until spring 2011, perhaps in response to Irwig's study, a Center for Sexual Function review that found similar conclusions, or numerous lawsuits.

While many men on the drug take it without problem, law firms across the U.S. have filed suit against Merck on behalf of those who have suffered sexual side effects.

Nonetheless, drug label changes and lawsuits have come too late for some men already suffering from persistent sexual side effects, including a 29 year old man, who took Propecia for four years, only to have his symptoms worsen after stopping the drug for 12 months. He suffers from low testosterone levels, which can lead to the growth of enlarge male breasts.

To prevent additional men from experiencing the negative sexual side effects of Propecia, Dr. Irwig is encouraging Merck to study the drug's lasting effects. He recommends a study of 10,000 patients — half on Propecia, half on a placebo — over a period of 5 years.

"But I don't see that happening," Irwig said. "It's too expensive."

Michael E. Schmidt is recognized as one of America's most passionate, accomplished and skilled trial lawyers. His law firm, Schmidt & Clark, LLP is currently accepting [Propecia lawsuits](#) in all 50 states. To learn more about this topic, please visit his website: <http://www.schmidtandclark.com/propecia>