Beware of buying medicine for sexual problems online

The peak Australian authority on male reproductive health is warning men about buying medicines for sexual problems on the internet without proper medical advice.

In particular, Andrology Australia is warning men not to buy medicines for erectile dysfunction (ED) without talking to their doctor first.

"Research we've done suggests that men of non-English speaking backgrounds are less likely to speak to a health professional about the condition," Andrology Australia Director Professor McLachlan said.

"But this can lead to a very dangerous situation if men are buying unproven medicines online instead of talking about their problem with a doctor."

Professor McLachlan said medicines for "sexual performance enhancement" had a huge market on the internet, but many were unproven and could pose major health risks.

"Sexual health is an area where many people feel vulnerable, so they may be attracted to the anonymity of going online to buy a 'cure', and avoiding the embarrassment of talking to a doctor," he said.

"The internet also offers cheaper medicines and can be very convenient, but buying these online exposes men to two issues – inadequate medical assessment, and exposure to inappropriate, inactive or potentially harmful medicines."

Professor McLachlan said doctors would normally do a full health check before prescribing treatment for sexual problems, because conditions like ED often co-existed with other serious illnesses such as diabetes, cholesterol problems, or depression.

"These important conditions will not be identified or addressed without a proper face to face assessment, so men need to speak to their doctors," he said.

Andrology Australia (The Australian Centre of Excellence in Male Reproductive Health) is the peak Australian authority on male reproductive health and associated conditions. It is an initiative funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and is administered by Monash University.