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## The medical facts behind Dr. Sloan's 'penile fracture' on 'Grey's Anatomy'

BY ROSEMARY BLACK  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

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Last night's episode of *Grey's Anatomy* gave male viewers something new to obsess about: a painful and embarrassing condition involving a very private body part.

After Mark "McSteamy" Sloan suffers a penile fracture while enjoying some illicit closet sex with *Lexie Grey* in the episode, the Internet lit up with searches for information about the injury.

Searches for keywords "penile fracture" and "broken penis" were still high on the top search gainers list well into Friday morning as men everywhere asked in horror: Can that really happen?

Bad news, guys: the answer's yes. "It's actually pretty common," says **Dr. Daniel Ronel**, a plastic surgeon in Santa Fe, New Mexico, who's treated the condition many times.

"The literature reports about 2,000 cases a year, which means there are probably more like 5,000 to 10,000 cases a year. It's underreported, for obvious reasons."

The most common reasons for a penile fracture involve sexual intercourse, masturbation, and trauma (such as a car accident, he says.)

Though there are no bones in this organ, when an engorged penis is bent sideways, it's possible to fracture the spongy areas on the sides, **Ronel** explains.

**Dr. Salvatore Giorganni**, pharmacologist and expert on men's sexual health, explains that extreme trauma results when the penis is bent.

"A fracture is not the exactly the most correct term, but it's a good general term for what we would call penile trauma," he explains.

Victims are embarrassed and tend to just load up on *Tylenol* and stay in bed, says **Jack Mydlo**, professor and chairman of the department of urology at *Temple University School of Medicine*.

"But when the penis is in the wrong position and it bends too much, it ruptures, so to speak. This is what leads to swelling."

The condition requires emergency surgery, says **Ronel**. "For years, people thought it could be treated with ice, rest and splinting, but that led to a 30 percent complication rate," he says.

"They need to go to the OR right away. The doctor will put stitches in to repair it and make sure the urethra did not get cut."

Possible complications include infection. "You could have a disfigurement of the urethra which could impair urination or injury to your erectile function," says **Giorganni**.

Though there was plenty of silly slapstick humor on the show last night as the interns speculated about who "broke" Sloan, the fact is that it's a very unfunny situation to the sufferer because there is, of course, speculation about why it happened.

"A penile fracture can occur during masturbation of the guy doesn't know what he's doing, and it can happen during sex, especially when alcohol is involved."

Though some may wonder if the *Grey's* plots are getting increasingly implausible, in



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Eric Dane stars as Mark Sloan on the ABC Television Network's "Grey's Anatomy."

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this case, medical experts are to see this condition front and center.

"They did a favor on the show by getting it out there, because it happens," says Giorgianni. "So if we lose some of the stigma and you know you're not a dork if it happens, then that can be a really positive thing. The most important thing is to get care."

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