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## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

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## **Viagra for Valentine's Day in the U.K.**

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**13<sup>th</sup> February, 2007**

## THE ARTICLE

### **Viagra for Valentine's Day in the U.K.**

It seems an unlikely coincidence, but the impotence drug Viagra goes on sale in the U.K. for the first time, starting on Valentine's Day, which is also National Impotence Day in Britain. From February 14th, men will be able to buy the pills over the counter, without a prescription. A pack of four tablets will cost US\$100. It is somewhat of a test as only three branches of the Boots nationwide pharmacy will sell the drug. This pilot scheme may be extended to other branches of the pharmacy if all goes well with the initial test run. Until now, the only way for British men to get Viagra was by visiting their doctor, which many men avoid because of being embarrassed to talk about their physical problems. A less reliable alternative is to order the drug over the Internet and risk purchasing harmful replicas.

Customers will still need to undergo a quick medical check to ensure the drug will not cause any harm. Pharmacists will take the blood pressure and test cholesterol and glucose levels of any man between the ages of 30 and 65 wanting to make an over-the-counter purchase. The guys will also have to fill in a medical history questionnaire. A Boots spokesperson said: "There are a number of safety checks in place to ensure correct supply. People will have to go through a thorough consultation with a pharmacist. They would then need to see a doctor to have a full medical examination before getting an ongoing supply." The pharmacy has a similar system for the sale of treatments for weight-loss and baldness. Viagra is taken by around 27 million men worldwide, making it one of the most profitable drugs of any kind.

## WARM-UPS

**1. DRUGS:** With your partner(s), talk about the different kinds of medicine / drugs you have taken in your life and whether you are on any medication now. What is your opinion of drugs? Change partners and share your information.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*coincidences / impotence / Viagra / Valentine's Day / prescriptions / pharmacies / medical checks / blood pressure / cholesterol / weight loss / baldness*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**3. WONDER DRUGS:** Viagra is often termed a wonder drug. With your partner(s), write down a list of other wonder drugs that are around now or need to be invented. Put them on the board. Rank them in order of most important.

**4. VALENTINE'S GIFTS:** With your partner(s), talk about whether these products would be welcome by men and woman as Valentine's Day presents. Rate them: 10 is "would be loved", 1 is "would be hated". Decide on whether or not you would like to receive the gifts.

- Viagra
- dinner in a romantic restaurant
- a ringtone with famous love songs
- a dozen red roses
- a new digital music player
- a trip to Paris
- a bicycle made for two
- diamond ear-rings
- VIP seats at a football stadium

**5. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A believe any man, whatever his age, should be able to buy Viagra over the counter and that the drug is not dangerous. Students B believe it is dangerous for men to buy and use Viagra without first having a medical. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

**6. PHARMACY:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "pharmacy". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. British men are buying women Viagra for Valentine's Day this year. T / F
- b. Viagra is only on sale over the counter in three U.K. pharmacies. T / F
- c. The sale of Viagra in the U.K. may go nationwide in the future. T / F
- d. A source of very safe and reliable replica Viagra is the Internet. T / F
- e. U.K. customers will need a medical check in the pharmacy. T / F
- f. Only men aged between 18 and 60 can buy the Viagra tablets. T / F
- g. To get a regular supply of the drug, men must consult a doctor. T / F
- h. Almost 270 million men worldwide use Viagra. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. coincidence | trial         |
| b. pills       | lucrative     |
| c. pilot       | copies        |
| d. reliable    | tablets       |
| e. replicas    | have          |
| f. undergo     | comprehensive |
| g. harm        | accident      |
| h. thorough    | constant      |
| i. ongoing     | dependable    |
| j. profitable  | injury        |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| a. It seems an unlikely                | test cholesterol and glucose levels |
| b. buy the pills over the counter,     | well with the initial test run      |
| c. This pilot scheme                   | undergo a quick medical check       |
| d. if all goes                         | without a prescription              |
| e. A less reliable                     | weight-loss and baldness            |
| f. Customers will still need to        | may be extended                     |
| g. take the blood pressure and         | supply                              |
| h. There are a number of safety checks | coincidence                         |
| i. before getting an ongoing           | alternative                         |
| j. the sale of treatments for          | in place                            |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

### Viagra for Valentine's Day in the U.K.

It seems an \_\_\_\_\_ coincidence, but the \_\_\_\_\_ drug Viagra goes on sale in the U.K. for the first time, starting on Valentine's Day, which is also National Impotence Day in Britain. From February 14th, men will be able to buy the pills over the \_\_\_\_\_, without a prescription. A pack of four tablets will cost US\$100. It is \_\_\_\_\_ of a test as only three branches of the Boots nationwide pharmacy will sell the drug. This \_\_\_\_\_ scheme may be extended to other branches of the pharmacy if all goes well with the \_\_\_\_\_ test run. Until now, the only way for British men to get Viagra was by visiting their doctor, which many men \_\_\_\_\_ because of being embarrassed to talk about their physical problems. A less reliable alternative is to order the drug over the Internet and \_\_\_\_\_ purchasing harmful replicas.

Customers will still need to \_\_\_\_\_ a quick medical check to ensure the drug will not \_\_\_\_\_ any harm. Pharmacists will take the blood pressure and test cholesterol and \_\_\_\_\_ levels of any man between the ages of 30 and 65 wanting to make an over-the-counter \_\_\_\_\_. The guys will also have to fill in a medical history questionnaire. A Boots spokesperson said: "There are a number of safety checks in \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure correct supply. People will have to go through a thorough \_\_\_\_\_ with a pharmacist. They would then need to see a doctor to have a full medical examination before getting an \_\_\_\_\_ supply." The pharmacy has a similar system for the sale of treatments for weight-loss and \_\_\_\_\_. Viagra is taken by around 27 million men worldwide, making it one of the most profitable drugs of any kind.

*initial*  
*somewhat*  
*counter*  
*risk*  
*unlikely*  
*avoid*  
*impotence*  
*pilot*

*purchase*  
*cause*  
*baldness*  
*undergo*  
*consultation*  
*ongoing*  
*glucose*  
*place*

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### Viagra for Valentine's Day in the U.K.

It seems \_\_\_\_\_, but the impotence drug Viagra goes on sale in the U.K. for the first time, starting on Valentine's Day, which is also National Impotence Day in Britain. From February 14th, men will be able to buy the pills over the counter, \_\_\_\_\_. A pack of four tablets will cost US\$100. It is \_\_\_\_\_ as only three branches of the Boots nationwide pharmacy will sell the drug. This pilot scheme may be extended to other branches of the pharmacy \_\_\_\_\_ with the initial test run. Until now, the only way for British men to get Viagra was by visiting their doctor, which many men avoid because of being embarrassed to talk about their physical problems. A \_\_\_\_\_ is to order the drug over the Internet and risk purchasing harmful replicas.

Customers will still \_\_\_\_\_ quick medical check to ensure the drug will not cause any harm. Pharmacists will take the blood pressure and \_\_\_\_\_ levels of any man between the ages of 30 and 65 wanting to make an over-the-counter purchase. The guys will also have to fill in a medical history questionnaire. A Boots spokesperson said: "There are a number of safety \_\_\_\_\_ correct supply. People will have to go through \_\_\_\_\_ with a pharmacist. They would then need to see a doctor to have a full medical examination before getting an ongoing supply." The pharmacy has a similar system for the sale of \_\_\_\_\_. Viagra is taken by around 27 million men worldwide, making it one of the most profitable drugs of any kind.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**pilot**' and '**scheme**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "VIAGRA" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about impotence and Viagra.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| • seems    | • undergo    |
| • counter  | • levels     |
| • somewhat | • history    |
| • initial  | • thorough   |
| • avoid    | • treatments |
| • harmful  | • kind       |

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) Do you think this is an interesting story?
- c) What do you think about Valentine's Day?
- d) Do you think it is coincidence that Valentine's Day and Britain's National Impotence Day fall on the same day?
- e) What is your impression of Viagra?
- f) Do you think such drugs should be made available over the counter everywhere in the world?
- g) Would you consider buying medicine over the Internet?
- h) Why do you think the British government is allowing just three branches of a pharmacy to sell Viagra?
- i) Do you get embarrassed discussing sexual problems with doctors?
- j) Do you think men or women are more embarrassed to consult a doctor about a physical or sexual problem?



### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What do you think about what you read?
- c) Do you think on-the-spot medical check-ups in pharmacies are a good idea?
- d) Do you worry about your glucose or cholesterol levels?
- e) How much money would you pay for over-the-counter drugs?
- f) Do you think it's OK to put Viagra in the same category as weight-loss and baldness treatments?
- g) What do you know about Viagra?
- h) Do you ever get junk mail advertising Viagra?
- i) What new wonder drug would you like to see invented?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

## LANGUAGE

**CORRECT WORD:** Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

### Viagra for Valentine's Day in the U.K.

It seems an (1) \_\_\_\_\_ coincidence, but the impotence drug Viagra goes on sale in the U.K. for the first time, starting on Valentine's Day, which is also National Impotence Day in Britain. From February 14th, men will be able to buy the pills over the counter, without a prescription. A (2) \_\_\_\_\_ of four tablets will cost US\$100. It is somewhat of a test as only three branches of the Boots nationwide pharmacy will sell the drug. This pilot scheme may be extended to other branches of the pharmacy if all (3) \_\_\_\_\_ well with the initial test run. Until now, the only way for British men to get Viagra was by visiting their doctor, which many men (4) \_\_\_\_\_ because of being embarrassed to talk about their physical problems. A (5) \_\_\_\_\_ reliable alternative is to order the drug over the Internet and risk purchasing harmful (6) \_\_\_\_\_.

Customers will still need to undergo a quick medical check to (7) \_\_\_\_\_ the drug will not (8) \_\_\_\_\_ any harm. Pharmacists will take the blood pressure and test cholesterol and glucose levels of any man between the ages of 30 and 65 wanting to make an over-the-counter purchase. The guys will also have to fill (9) \_\_\_\_\_ a medical history questionnaire. A Boots spokesperson said: "There are a number of safety checks in (10) \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure correct supply. People will have to go through a (11) \_\_\_\_\_ consultation with a pharmacist. They would then need to see a doctor to have a full medical examination before getting an ongoing supply." The pharmacy has a similar system for the sale of (12) \_\_\_\_\_ for weight-loss and baldness. Viagra is taken by around 27 million men worldwide, making it one of the most profitable drugs of any kind.

- |     |              |               |                 |                |
|-----|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1.  | (a) unlike   | (b) unlikable | (c) unlikely    | (d) likely     |
| 2.  | (a) stack    | (b) pack      | (c) lack        | (d) sack       |
| 3.  | (a) recovers | (b) gets      | (c) drives      | (d) goes       |
| 4.  | (a) avid     | (b) avoid     | (c) avoidance   | (d) avert      |
| 5.  | (a) lessen   | (b) less      | (c) lesson      | (d) least      |
| 6.  | (a) replicas | (b) replaces  | (c) replacement | (d) replicates |
| 7.  | (a) ensure   | (b) insure    | (c) assure      | (d) sure       |
| 8.  | (a) infect   | (b) course    | (c) effect      | (d) cause      |
| 9.  | (a) up       | (b) on        | (c) in          | (d) with       |
| 10. | (a) placed   | (b) places    | (c) placement   | (d) place      |
| 11. | (a) thought  | (b) thorough  | (c) through     | (d) though     |
| 12. | (a) treat    | (b) treats    | (c) treatments  | (d) treating   |

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information about Viagra and similar drugs. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. POSTER:** Make a poster about Valentine's Day around the world. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Vote on who made the best poster.

**4. WONDER DRUG:** Write an article describing a newly invented wonder drug. Who is it for? What effect will it have on the world? Will everybody be able to have it?

**5. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE:** Write a newspaper article about Viagra. You decide the nature of the story. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

**6. LETTER:** Write a letter to the pharmacy that will sell Viagra in three of its branches. Give your opinion on the pilot scheme. Ask the pharmacy three questions. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. T      f. F      g. T      h. F

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. coincidence | accident      |
| b. pills       | tablets       |
| c. pilot       | trial         |
| d. reliable    | dependable    |
| e. replicas    | copies        |
| f. undergo     | have          |
| g. harm        | injury        |
| h. thorough    | comprehensive |
| i. ongoing     | constant      |
| j. profitable  | lucrative     |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| a. It seems an unlikely                | coincidence                         |
| b. buy the pills over the counter,     | without a prescription              |
| c. This pilot scheme                   | may be extended                     |
| d. if all goes                         | well with the initial test run      |
| e. A less reliable                     | alternative                         |
| f. Customers will still need to        | undergo a quick medical check       |
| g. take the blood pressure and         | test cholesterol and glucose levels |
| h. There are a number of safety checks | in place                            |
| i. before getting an ongoing           | supply                              |
| j. the sale of treatments for          | weight-loss and baldness            |

### GAP FILL:

#### Viagra for Valentine's Day in the U.K.

It seems an **unlikely** coincidence, but the **impotence** drug Viagra goes on sale in the U.K. for the first time, starting on Valentine's Day, which is also National Impotence Day in Britain. From February 14th, men will be able to buy the pills over the **counter**, without a prescription. A pack of four tablets will cost US\$100. It is **somewhat** of a test as only three branches of the Boots nationwide pharmacy will sell the drug. This **pilot** scheme may be extended to other branches of the pharmacy if all goes well with the **initial** test run. Until now, the only way for British men to get Viagra was by visiting their doctor, which many men **avoid** because of being embarrassed to talk about their physical problems. A less reliable alternative is to order the drug over the Internet and **risk** purchasing harmful replicas.

Customers will still need to **undergo** a quick medical check to ensure the drug will not **cause** any harm. Pharmacists will take the blood pressure and test cholesterol and **glucose** levels of any man between the ages of 30 and 65 wanting to make an over-the-counter **purchase**. The guys will also have to fill in a medical history questionnaire. A Boots spokesperson said: "There are a number of safety checks in **place** to ensure correct supply. People will have to go through a thorough **consultation** with a pharmacist. They would then need to see a doctor to have a full medical examination before getting an **ongoing** supply." The pharmacy has a similar system for the sale of treatments for weight-loss and **baldness**. Viagra is taken by around 27 million men worldwide, making it one of the most profitable drugs of any kind.

### LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - c    2 - b    3 - d    4 - b    5 - b    6 - a    7 - a    8 - d    9 - c    10 - d    11 - b    12 - c