

# Health tip: Men's health

It is important for men to exercise, eat healthy and take care of themselves mentally. Thirty-five percent of men over the age of twenty are classified as obese. Additionally, a greater percentage of men (50%) have higher blood pressure than women (44%).<sup>1,2</sup>

## Leading causes of death for men

The leading cause of death for men is heart disease. While this is also the leading cause of death for females, the average is higher for males. The other leading causes of death for men are:

- Cancer
- Unintentional injuries of accidents<sup>2</sup>

## There are many risk factors that impact the health of men

Some of these include:

- Obesity
- Unhealthy diet
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Inadequate sleep
- Not seeing a primary care physician on a regular basis for checkups and getting appropriate screenings<sup>4</sup>

## Men & social isolation

Research has shown that men tend to be more socially isolated than women as they age, even more so if they are single and living alone. It is important for men to stay socially active to reduce the risk of isolation. Ideas for staying socially active include:

- Joining a sports team or coaching a sports team
- Take a class or learn a new skill
- Join a game night
- Do volunteer work<sup>5</sup>

## Men & stress

Men often suffer greatly from stress, but are more likely to keep it bottled up to protect their image. It is important for men to find healthy ways to manage and reduce stress such as:

- Find support/ talk to a friend or doctor
- Exercise
- Meditation
- Get plenty of sleep
- Connect with your community or faith-based organizations<sup>3</sup>

## Suggested screenings & checkups for men<sup>4</sup>

Receiving health screenings at the right time is one of the most important health actions a man can do for his health. Screenings may detect diseases early, even before symptoms occur, when they are easier to treat.

It is important for men to have regular checkups with a physician and receive preventive screenings based on their age, gender and health risk factors. Suggested screenings include:

- **Blood Pressure**—a healthy blood pressure is less than 120/80
- **Cholesterol**—a healthy total cholesterol level is less than 200 mg/dl
- **Cancer Screenings**—the Centers for Disease Control supports screening for colon and lung cancers as recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. The CDC recommends talking with your doctor about being screened for prostate cancer. Depending on your health history and family health history, your doctor may recommend a digital rectal exam (DRE) and/or a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test.
- **Fasting Blood Sugar/A1C**—a healthy fasting blood sugar level of 99 mg/dL or lower is normal, 100 to 125 mg/dL indicates you may have prediabetes, and 126 mg/dL or higher indicates you may have diabetes. Additional discussions with your doctor should occur if your fasting blood sugar is above 100 mg/dl.
- **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**
- **Glaucoma**—half of people with glaucoma don't know they have it. Glaucoma is a group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve and may result in vision loss and even blindness. Prevention includes having a comprehensive dilated eye exam to help catch glaucoma early and start treatment if needed. Your eye care specialist will recommend how often you should have follow-up exams.

## Small changes may reduce your risk

To reduce the risk of developing chronic health conditions, men can make behavior changes to help manage risks or maintain their health. Behaviors that may reduce risk include:

- **Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.** Achieving a healthy weight isn't only about short-term changes. It's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating, regular physical activity, and balancing the calories you consume with the calories your body uses.
- **Eat a healthier diet.** According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans a healthy eating plan: Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products; Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts; Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.
- **Exercise regularly.** Being physically active and reducing the amount of "sitting time" during the day may improve your overall health regardless of age, ability or physical shape. The goal is to move more and sit less throughout the day.
- **Don't use tobacco products**
- **If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.** Dietary Guidelines for Americans defines moderate drinking as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. The Dietary Guidelines do not recommend anyone start drinking for any reason.
- **Sleep 7 to 9 hours a night**
- **See your doctor for routine care<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Men's Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/mens-health.htm>. July 2023. Accessed October 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Facts About Hypertension. [https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm#:~:text=Uncontrolled%20high%20blood%20pressure%20is,pressure%20than%20women%20\(44%25\)](https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm#:~:text=Uncontrolled%20high%20blood%20pressure%20is,pressure%20than%20women%20(44%25).). July 2023. Accessed October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coping with Stress. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/copingwith-stresstips.html>. November 2021. Accessed October 2023.

<sup>4</sup> UnitedHealthcare, Men's preventive health tips. <https://www.uhc.com/health-and-wellness/health-topics/mens-health/preventive-care>. 2023. Accessed October 2023.

<sup>5</sup> National Institute on Aging, Loneliness and Social Isolation - Tips for Staying Connected. <https://www.uhc.com/health-and-wellness/health-topics/mens-health/preventive-care>. January 2021. Accessed October 2023.

This information is for general informational purposes only and is not intended nor should be construed as medical advice. Individuals should consult an appropriate medical professional to determine what may be right for them.