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MEN'S HEALTH

American men live 5 years less than women.

Compared to women, men are more likely to:

- Smoke, drink more, and lead less healthy lifestyles
- Engage in fearless, risky, and dangerous behaviors
- Put off routine checkups
- Ignore symptoms of a health problem

Symptoms you should never ignore:

- Blood in the urine, changes in urine
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Skin changes
- Unintentional weight loss

Top ten health concerns for men

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Injuries
- Stroke
- COPD
- Diabetes
- Flu and Pneumonia
- Suicide
- Kidney disease
- Alzheimer's disease

No. 1 — Heart disease

- Eat a healthy diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fiber and fish. Cut back on foods high in saturated fat and sodium.
- If you have high cholesterol or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's treatment recommendations.
- Include physical activity in your daily routine.
- Don't smoke or use other tobacco products. Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation. Too much alcohol can raise blood pressure.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.
- Manage stress.

No. 2 — Cancer

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among men — mostly due to cigarette smoking, according to the American Cancer Society. Lung cancer is followed by prostate cancer and colorectal cancer. To decrease the risk of cancer:

- Don't smoke or use other tobacco products. Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Include physical activity in your daily routine.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and avoid high-fat foods.
- Limit your sun exposure. When you're outdoors, use sunscreen.
- If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation.
- Consult your doctor for regular cancer screenings.

No. 3 — Injuries

The leading cause of fatal accidents among men is motor vehicle crashes, according to the CDC. To reduce your risk of a deadly crash:

- Wear your seat belt.

- Follow the speed limit.
- Don't drive under the influence of alcohol or any other substances.
- Don't drive while sleepy.

Falls and poisoning are other leading causes of fatal accidents. Take common-sense precautions, such as using chemical products only in ventilated areas, using non-slip mats in the bathtub and placing carbon monoxide detectors near the bedrooms in your home.

No. 4 — Stroke

You can't control some stroke risk factors, such as family history, age and race. But you can control other contributing factors. For example:

- Don't smoke.
- If you have high cholesterol or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's treatment recommendations.
- Limit the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet. Try to avoid trans fat entirely.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Include physical activity in your daily routine.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.
- If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation.

No. 5 — COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a group of chronic lung conditions, including bronchitis and emphysema. To prevent COPD:

- Don't smoke. Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Minimize exposure to chemicals and air pollution.

No. 6 — Type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes — the most common type of diabetes. Possible complications of type 2 diabetes include heart disease, blindness, nerve damage and kidney damage. To prevent type 2 diabetes:

- Lose excess pounds, if you're overweight.
- Eat a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables and low-fat foods.

- Include physical activity in your daily routine.

No. 7 — Flu

Influenza is a common viral infection. While a case of the flu isn't usually serious for otherwise healthy adults, complications of the flu can be deadly — especially for those who have weak immune systems or chronic illnesses. To protect yourself from the flu, get an annual flu vaccine.

No. 8 — Suicide

Suicide is another leading men's health risk. An important risk factor for suicide among men is depression. If you think you may be depressed, consult your doctor. Treatment is available. If you're contemplating suicide, call for emergency medical help or go the nearest emergency room. You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255).

No. 9 — Kidney disease

Kidney failure is often a complication of diabetes or high blood pressure. If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's treatment suggestions. In addition:

- Eat a healthy diet. Limit the amount of salt you consume.
- Include physical activity in your daily routine.
- Lose excess pounds, if you're overweight.
- Take medications as prescribed.

No. 10 — Alzheimer's disease

There's no proven way to prevent Alzheimer's disease, but consider taking these steps:

- Take care of your heart. High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and high cholesterol may increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's.
- Avoid head injuries. There appears to be a link between head injury and future risk of Alzheimer's.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Include physical activity in your daily routine.
- Avoid tobacco.
- If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation.

- Stay socially active.
- Maintain mental fitness. Practice mental exercises, and take steps to learn new things.

Screening Tests:

- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm, age 50 with family hx, age 65 tobacco use
- Cholesterol screen
- Blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Obesity – BMI
- Osteoporosis
- STD/HIV
- Skin Cancer
- Colon Cancer, age 50 then every 10 years
- Prostate Cancer, age 50

Exercise Benefits

Exercise Health Benefit 1: Lower cholesterol

As most men get older, cholesterol numbers begin to move in the wrong direction. Levels of so-called bad cholesterol — low-density lipoprotein (LDL) — gradually increase. Levels of good cholesterol, called high-density lipoprotein (HDL), tend to fall. Unfortunately, that combination of high LDL and low HDL is one of the leading risk factors for heart disease. Excess cholesterol accumulates on the inner lining of blood vessels, leading to atherosclerosis and heart attacks. The best way to keep LDL cholesterol levels down is to eat a diet low in saturated fat (the kind found in meat and high-fat dairy products.) The single best way to boost good HDL cholesterol? Exercise. Limit cholesterol in diet to 300 mg/day.

Exercise Health Benefit 2: Lower triglycerides

Triglycerides are a form of fat found in the blood. Rising triglyceride levels are associated with increased risk of heart disease.

Exercise Health Benefit 3: Lower risk of high blood pressure

As blood pressure climbs, the risk of heart disease and stroke accelerates. Unfortunately, blood pressure levels typically climb as men get older.

Exercise Health Benefit 4: Reduced inflammation

Regular exercise has been shown to reduce levels of C-reactive protein, a measure of inflammation. That matters because cholesterol-laden plaques on the lining of arteries are most likely to break off and cause heart attacks when they become inflamed.

Exercise Health Benefit 5: Better blood vessels

To respond to changing demands for oxygen, blood vessels must be flexible enough to widen and narrow. Smoking, cholesterol build-up, and just plain aging tend to stiffen vessels, increasing heart attack risk. A growing number of studies show that exercise training helps maintain the ability of blood vessels to open and constrict in response to changing physical demands.

Exercise Health Benefit 6: Lower risk of diabetes

Adult onset diabetes — fueled mostly by too much body fat — is one of the biggest health worries on the horizon. Staying active can help you keep the weight off. But research shows that even for people who are overweight or obese, exercise reduces the risk of diabetes. The Diabetes Prevention Program found that an exercise and weight loss program lowered the risk of type 2 diabetes by a whopping 58% over a three-year period. And the volunteers in that program weren't running marathons. In fact, the exercise they were doing was the equivalent of burning only an additional 593 calories of energy — about the equivalent of walking around six miles a week for most men.

Exercise Health Benefit 7: A hedge against colon cancer

Colon cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer death in men. Approximately 80% of cases of this disease could be prevented. A healthier diet (with more fiber and whole grains) is part of the prescription. But exercise turns out to be just as important as diet. Studies have shown that physical activity may reduce colon cancer risk by as much as 30 to 40%.

Exercise Health Benefit 8: Strong bones

Another unwelcome effect of aging is thinning bones, which can lead to a greater risk of fractures. In a study that followed 3,262 men from their 40s to their 60s, strenuous physical activity dramatically lowered the risk of hip fractures.

Exercise Health Benefit 9: Weight loss

A lifetime of regular physical activity — even activities as simple as walking half an hour most days — can help keep that belly from bulging over your belt. 3500 calories in one pound.

Exercise Health Benefit 10: A longer life

Add it all up and an active life also means a longer and healthier life. In a 2004 study researchers followed 15,853 men aged 30 to 59. Over a 20 year period, men who engaged in physically active leisure activities — jogging, skiing, swimming, playing ball, or doing serious gardening — were up to 21% less likely to develop cardiovascular disease or to die of any cause during the study period.

How much exercise do you need to reap these health benefits?

The answer to how much exercise you need depends partly on what you're after. Burning about 1,000 extra calories a week in activities is likely to extend your life. Walking half an hour most days of the week is all you need to significantly lower your risk of colon cancer and diabetes. But the more physical activities you can weave into your daily life, the healthier you'll be. Most studies of physical activity show a strong dose-response rate, the more you do, the more you benefit.

Nutrition: Eat a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grain foods.

- Limit highly processed foods, including baked goods, prepared snacks, juices, and sweetened drinks. These increase calories, sugars, and trans-fat without providing needed vitamins and minerals.
- Include whole-grain breads and cereals, fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and low-fat dairy products.
- Limit saturated fat found in meats and whole-fat dairy products, and trans-fats found in hydrogenated oils in many margarines, chips, and packaged baked goods.
- Use small amounts of mono- and polyunsaturated fats found in olive, flaxseed, canola, and soybean oils; avocados; nuts; seeds; and fish or fish oil capsules, which contain heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt. Use herbs, spices, and fruits to flavor food.

An example of a healthy diet is the Mediterranean Diet. The basic components are:

- Fatty fish such as salmon, sardines, trout, or tuna.* These are fish that are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which appear to protect against heart disease. Walnuts and other "tree" nuts are also good sources of omega-3 fatty acids.
- Olive oil as the oil of choice. Olive oil contains high amounts of monounsaturated fats, which also appear to protect the heart.
- Lots of vegetables in the diet: at least seven servings of vegetables per day. Peas, beans, and nuts are especially good.
- Whole grain foods, including bread, cereals, pasta, and brown rice.
- Moderate alcohol consumption. For men, this means no more than two drinks per day and for women no more than a single drink. If you don't drink, or if you have had a problem with alcohol in the past, don't start. (A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits.)
- Very limited consumption of saturated fats in the form of red meat, butter, and cheese.
- Avoid foods that are high in sugar, processed white flour, or contain "partially hydrogenated" oils (also known as "trans" fats). Avoid eating margarine or snack foods such as chips or French fries, which contain lots of trans fats.

It's important to remember that there can be too much of a good thing! Try to eat only enough to support your body at a healthy weight. If you need specific ideas for preparing Mediterranean Diet meals, there are many excellent cookbooks available.

Vitamins and Minerals: micronutrients

Micronutrients are the vitamins and minerals found in food that nourish your body and help to keep you healthy.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), adult Americans do not typically get enough of the following nutrients:

- Calcium
- Potassium
- Fiber
- Magnesium
- Vitamins A, C and E

Try to incorporate more of these nutrients in your daily diet. Keep in mind that it's best to consume a variety of foods, instead of just taking a multivitamin, to make sure that your body is able to absorb the micronutrients properly.

Prevention:

Aspirin (81 mg, chewable)

Immunizations: Flu vaccine annually, Pneumonia vaccine once after age 65

Your bottom line: Take health threats seriously

Health risks can be scary, but there's no reason to panic. Instead, do everything you can to lead a healthy lifestyle — eating a healthy diet, staying physically active, quitting smoking, getting regular checkups and taking precautions in your daily activities. Adopting these preventive measures will increase your odds of living a long, healthy life.

You don't stop exercising because you get old, you get old because you stop exercising!

Web Sites:

Familydoctor.org

Mayoclinic.org

CDC.gov

Healthfinder.gov

Menshealthnetwork.org

Members.Kaiserpermanente.org