

# *THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO* HEALTH FOR MEN



**FOR HIS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING**

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# Introduction To Men's Health

Men don't pay enough attention to their health when compared to women. They often don't realize they are at risk for diseases and must see the doctor regularly to make sure that the most common things affecting them are addressed or screened for at various times in their life.

The lack of ability to assertively manage their health problems means that many men suffer from various health problems at different stages of their lives. The health problem often predates the visit to the doctor and so they aren't treated preventatively as much as women are.

## Men And Alcohol

Men also have a higher chance of undertaking risky behaviors, which leads to a higher incidence of injury and death at a young age. Some of this risky behavior is associated with alcohol and drug use.



According to the National Health Review Interview of 2014, 31% of men over the age of 18 have had five or more drinks in one day during at least one day in the past year. This not only contributes to an increase in alcoholism in men but an increased risk of serious injury and death because of driving while drunk injuries or alcohol-related risky behaviors.

## Men And Exercise

Men do better in the exercise department. While they may not partake in planned exercise programs, over half of men met the 2008 federal guidelines for physical activity, mostly by engaging in leisure activities. They may work out at the gym, jog, or participate in sports with others that help contribute to getting enough exercise well past the age of 18 years. Exercise is



partially preventative against things like high blood pressure and heart disease—things that are more common in men than in women.

## Men And Cigarettes

Another health problem in men that contributes to later disease is smoking. Even with the knowledge that cigarette smoking causes a vast variety of health problems and the expense of smoking, about 19% of all men continue to smoke.

Add to this the fact that almost 35% of men over the age of 20 are obese (Centers For Disease Control) you have the perfect storm that puts many men at risk for heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease.



## Hypertension

Men have a high risk of hypertension and many of these cases are undiagnosed. Hypertension has no symptoms and, unless there are screening programs or the man has a regular connection with a doctor, the hypertension gets undiagnosed until after it has led to secondary problems, such as stroke and heart disease.

**According to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, men suffer higher rates of hypertension than women do; here is a breakdown by age:**

- Age 20-34 - 11.1%
- Age 35-44 - 25.1%
- Age 45-54 - 37.1%
- Age 55-64 - 54.0%
- Age 65-74 - 64.0%
- Age 75 and older - 66.7%

Part of the problem is one of lack of health insurance. Without health insurance, these men are likely to avoid seeing doctors, even if they have a family history of a specific disease or have symptoms of diseases.

## **Men And Diet**

Men are more likely to fail to pay attention to having a healthy diet. They eat foods high in fat and cholesterol and many are addicted to junk food or food bought from fast food restaurants.

A recent American Time Use Survey conducted by the BLS found that the average man spends only 17 minutes a day on food prep and cleanup, which means that they are not preparing their own meals using whole food in support of a healthy diet.



This contributes to obesity, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure due to excess salt consumption. Men just don't step on the scale as often as women do and are then surprised when their bad habits lead to weight gain and disease. Things like hyperlipidemia have no symptoms and unless a man chooses to see the doctor and has his cholesterol tested, he might not know he has hyperlipidemia until something like heart disease surprises him.

## **Men and Mortality**

Men tend to die younger than women do by a factor of about ten years. In the US population, 839 out of 100,000 men die every year.



## **Leading Causes Of Death In Men**

The Centers For Disease Control reported the top 7 leading causes of death among men in 2013:

1. Heart disease - 24.6%
2. Cancer - 23.5%
3. Unintentional injuries - 6.3%
4. Chronic lower respiratory diseases - 5.4%
5. Stroke - 4.7%
6. Diabetes - 3.1%
7. Suicide - 2.5%

Whether it is because of an increase in risky behavior or risking their lives by failing to take preventative tests to detect diseases early, men have a greater chance of being struck down with diseases unexpectedly.

Only by taking proactive means, regularly receiving health care, and reducing risk factors of the various diseases can men hope to lead healthy and vibrant lives into old age.

# Heart Disease

In spite of better technology and better public awareness about the risk factors for heart disease, it remains the number one cause of death in men in the US.

**Statistics reported by the Centers For Disease Control are a rude awakening:**

- Heart disease kills about 300,000 men every year. This amounts to about 1 in every 4 deaths among men.
- It is the leading cause of death for men of most ethnic groups in the US, including Caucasians, African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanics. It is the second leading cause of death among Asians in the US (behind cancer).
- About half of all men who suddenly die of heart disease have had no prior symptoms. This means that even if you suffer from no heart disease symptoms, you may still have heart disease.
- About 70 to 89% of sudden cardiac deaths occur in men.



## What Is Heart Disease

The term “heart disease” involves much more than a heart attack.

**Three separate diseases fall under the umbrella of heart disease:**

- **Cerebrovascular disease:** This is a condition in which plaques form in the arteries leading to or inside the brain. The carotid arteries in the neck are the main arteries involved in plaque formation and are the ones most commonly involved in strokes. The plaques narrow the arteries and blood clots within the narrowed artery, resulting in a blocked artery and a stroke.
- **Heart Attack:** A heart attack involves having plaque formation and narrowing of the coronary arteries of the heart. Similar to a stroke, the plaques narrow the coronary

arteries and a blood clot forms in the narrowed area, blocking blood flow to the heart muscle, leading to a heart attack.

- **Peripheral vascular disease:** People with heart attacks and stroke are also at a greater risk of peripheral vascular disease. In this condition, the arteries leading to the legs become clogged with cholesterol and calcium-containing plaques. This leads to decreased blood flow to the legs and symptoms of claudication, which is pain in the calves or thighs when walking longer distances. If a blood vessel also develops a clot in the narrowed portion, the circulation to the legs is lost and gangrene can form.

## Risk Factors

There are three major risk factors for heart disease in men, including:

- High blood pressure
- Smoking cigarettes
- Elevated LDL cholesterol

These are common risk factors. The National Institutes Of Health report that about 49% of all American live with at least 1 of the 3 main risk factors for heart disease.



Many other health conditions and lifestyle factors increase the risk of a man getting heart disease. These include the following:

- Being overweight or obese
- Having diabetes
- Having a poor diet high in saturated fat
- Being physically inactive
- Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol

## Preventing Heart Disease

Heart disease can be prevented in many ways. Some things you can do to decrease the risk of having heart disease include the following:

- **Maintain a normal weight:** This means eating fewer calories and watching the amount of saturated fat in the diet
- **Get aerobic exercise:** This means getting 30 minutes of aerobic exercise like running, swimming, or walking on most days of the week
- **Quitting smoking:** Smoking is one of the major risk factors for heart disease
- **Maintaining good diabetic control:** This means watching the diet and taking medications to keep blood sugars under control. It also means screenings in the form of blood tests, especially for men at high risk for type 2 diabetes
- **Lowering cholesterol:** This can be done by taking medications to reduce cholesterol and by eating a low cholesterol diet
- **Maintaining a normal blood pressure:** This can be done by taking medications for high blood pressure and exercising regularly

## Men And Cancer Risks

There are an estimated 1,650,000 newly diagnosed cases of cancer each year with about 600,000 of these cases ending in death. Men get cancer at the same rate as women but have different cancers affecting them. Fortunately, the rate of cancer death is decreasing due to better cancer treatments and research on the various types of cancer.

In men, the top cancers found include cancer of the prostate, skin cancer, lung cancer, and colon cancer. Many of these cancers are directly related to lifestyle factors such as smoking and drinking alcohol.

### Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed of all cancers and the American Cancer Society's 2015 estimates for US males are:

- About 220,800 new cases
- About 27,540 deaths



Prostate cancer is a male disease because women do not have prostate glands. Prostate cancer is very common and its incidence increases with age. Prostate cancer is the most diagnosed cancer in men after skin cancer and is one of the leading causes of cancer death in older men. The risk of prostate cancer increases with age to the point where it is estimated that 80% of men who are ninety years of age or older have some degree of prostate cancer.

While 1 in 6 men will be diagnosed, only 1 in 35 will die because the cancer presents in various forms, from slow growing to much more aggressive varieties, says Dr. Djenaba Joseph, medical officer for cancer prevention at the Centers For Disease Control. So far, excerpts have yet to come up with tests that identify which types are more or most aggressive.

**Two types of prostate cancer:** 1) an aggressive form of prostate cancer that metastasizes to bones and other body areas, leading to death or disability if not treated: 2) a non-aggressive form of prostate cancer that grows slowly and doesn't metastasize as much as the aggressive type.

It is important for the doctor to try to distinguish between the types because, if the man has a slow growing type, the cancer may simply be watched or parts of the cancer removed to reduce symptoms.

Aggressive treatment, such as removal of the prostate, radiation, chemotherapy, and hormonal therapy, can be reserved for the fast growing types of prostate cancer.

**Some symptoms of prostate cancer include:**

- Poor urinary stream
- An increased risk of bladder infections
- Urinary blood
- Erectile dysfunction
- Pain in the bones from spread to bony areas
- Weakness of the legs due to pressing on the spinal cord by the cancer itself



## Prostate Cancer Detection

Prostate cancer can be screened for in men over the age of 40 by having the doctor do a digital rectal examination to check for abnormal lumps or abnormal shape of the prostate gland and a blood test called a PSA test. This stands for "prostate specific antigen" and can be elevated in benign prostate disease as well. A PSA test alone isn't a good screening test for prostate cancer because some prostate cancers don't have elevated PSA levels and the PSA level can be elevated for reasons other than prostate cancer.



Until better prostate cancer screening comes along, screening for the PSA level and the digital rectal examination remain the best possible tests for the disease and men shouldn't be squeamish about having these tests done.

## Risk Factors For Prostate Cancer

There are several risk factors for prostate cancer. These include the following:

- **Age** - About 60 percent of prostate cancer occurs in men over the age of 65.
- **Ethnicity** - Prostate cancer has a higher risk in African American men than in Caucasians.
- **Geography** - Prostate cancer is found in greater numbers in North America, Northwestern Europe, Caribbean islands, and Australia.
- **Family history** - Prostate cancer runs in families.
- **Genetic factors** - Men with mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene have a higher risk of prostate cancer.
- **Men who eat a lot of red meat or drink high fat dairy products** are at higher risk of developing prostate cancer.
- **Men who are obese** have a higher chance of getting the more aggressive types of cancer.
- **Men who have had prostatitis** have an increased risk of prostate cancer in some studies.
- **Men who have had a vasectomy** have a slightly higher risk of developing prostate cancer.

## Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is identified at a high rate but isn't often included in cancer statistics because most skin cancers are completely treatable. Skin cancer is the second most diagnosed cancer in men after prostate cancer.

Men have double the rate of skin cancer when compared to women. This is because they are exposed more to the sun in certain occupations, they do not wear sunscreen, and they don't see the doctor often enough to be adequately screened for skin cancer.

Basal cell cancer and squamous cell cancer are the two main types of skin cancer in men. Melanoma, while not as common is the most lethal form and the leading cause of skin cancer deaths among men. If the cancer is not of the melanoma type, the cancer will simply be disfiguring and, if not removed altogether, can result in a large cancer that is difficult to remove and disfigures the person in the area the cancer used to be.

Squamous cell cancer has a low rate of metastases but can metastasize if not treated soon enough. Few people die from basal cell cancer and squamous cell cancer, while melanoma is relatively lethal if not managed correctly. Protecting your skin from UV rays is the best preventative measure against skin cancer, this is especially important for men who work outdoors.

## Lung Cancer

While other cancers may be more prevalent, the number one cancer killer in men is lung cancer. Lung cancer is highly associated with smoking but can be due to secondhand smoke, pollution, asbestos exposure (an occupational exposure), radon gas, and heredity.



Men with lung cancer will report weight loss, cough, and the production of bloody sputum. Shortness of breath can occur as the cancer worsens. Because there are no accepted screening tests for lung cancer, it is not often found in its early stages so that, once a man is diagnosed with lung cancer, he has about a year to live.

Because lung cancer is usually due to smoking (according to WebMd, in 90% of cases) and because more women have been smoking in recent years than men have, actually more women die from lung cancer when compared to men.

The incidence of lung cancer between men and women is close, however, with almost half of all lung cancer deaths being men. There are enough lung cancer deaths each year to fill the Superdome at any given point in time.

**Lung cancer is a horrible disease: aggressive, painful, and almost always deadly.**

**SO, ARE YOU STILL SMOKING?**

## **Colon Cancer**

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men. It is caused by polyps in the colon that are allowed to grow into colorectal cancer.

There are hereditary causes of colon cancer as well as environmentally caused colon cancer. Colon cancer can be caused by eating a high fat, low fiber diet, for example.

Colon cancer can, for the most part be preventable. It is recommended that all men have a screening colonoscopy at the age of 50 and every ten years thereafter. Any polyps found can be removed and colon cancer can be identified in its early stages, where it is more easily treatable. There are other screening tests for colon cancer but the colonoscopy is considered the gold standard of screening methods.

Cancer in men is a serious problem. The only way men can reverse the chances of cancer death is to see the doctor and be screened for the various types of cancer for which screening is possible.

Healthy living also goes a long way toward reducing the risk of cancer in susceptible men.

# Stroke

Stroke involves a blood clot blocking passage of free flow of blood to the brain so that brain cells die. This results in paralysis on one side of the body, balance difficulties, speech and swallowing problems, and numbness or tingling, usually on just one side of the body; damage to the left side of the brain leads to difficulties on the right side of the body and vice versa.

## Risk Factors

According to the Centers For Disease Control, stroke is the 5th leading cause of death in the United States and is one of the major contributors of adult disability.



Strokes represent one of three types of heart disease, which includes:

- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- Peripheral vascular disease

While heredity has a great deal to do with who gets a stroke and who doesn't, there are other risk factors for getting a stroke.

### Major Risk Factors:

The Centers For Disease Control cites that as many as 49% of Americans have at least one of these three major risk factors:

- High blood pressure
- Smoking, including secondhand smoke
- High cholesterol

## Other Risk Factors For Stroke

- Diabetes
- Physical Inactivity
- Obesity
- Advancing age
- Family history
- Race (the incidence is higher in African Americans)
- Having a transient ischemic attack or “mini-stroke”
- Alcohol and substance abuse

## Stroke Incidence

The American Stroke Association cites that:

- Overall, the incidence of stroke is 1.25 times greater in men than in women. This gap closes a bit as men and women age so that, by the time people reach their 80s, the risk of stroke is as high in women as it is in men
- Every year about 795,000 US citizens suffer from a stroke
- About 600,000 cases involve first attacks of stroke, while the remainder involves recurrences of stroke
- Most stroke victims are over the age of 65 (about 75 %)
- As a person ages, the risk of suffering from a stroke doubles each decade after the age of 55
- Someone has a stroke in the US every 40 seconds
- 1 out of every 17 deaths in the US are caused by having a stroke
- The risk is higher in smokers when compared to non-smokers

40% of all stroke deaths occur in men (Stroke Awareness Foundation)

## Signs And Symptoms

The symptoms you get when suffering from a stroke depend on which arteries are blocked. Commonly, the left and right carotid arteries are affected, meaning that the entire side of the body on the opposite side to the injured carotid artery is affected.

Signs and symptoms of stroke include:

- Blurry vision or double vision from damage to the visual centers of the brain
- Confusion
- Difficulty with speech
- Weakness of arms or legs where usually the arm and leg on the same side are affected to varying degrees
- Dizziness
- Loss of balance
- Pain in an extremity—this is an uncommon symptom of a stroke.
- Sudden extreme headache—this occurs with hemorrhagic strokes
- Facial droop, especially on the right side
- Disorientation or change in mental status
- Hiccups that won't go away

Historically, when a man had a stroke, the doctors simply gave oxygen and waited to see what kinds of deficits there were. The patient's symptoms were usually worse in the beginning and gradually improved over the course of a few days. Whatever the patient had left over was usually permanent and the patient needed physical therapy and rehabilitation in order to work with the abilities they had left.

Now, with the use of tissue plasminogen activator (TPA), if a stroke is caught within a few hours of onset, the clot can be dissolved and some brain function can be restored. This means that stroke patients can potentially recover completely and can be placed on anticoagulant therapy to avoid a recurrence of a stroke.

Potential stroke victims can undergo a carotid endarterectomy or other surgical intervention to clean out the arteries so they aren't so narrowed. This also prevents recurrent strokes.

## **Prevention**

Men can do a lot to avoid becoming a stroke victim by eating right and taking medications to lower cholesterol. Moderate exercise can help as well as visits to the doctor in order to monitor cholesterol levels and blood pressure. The proper management of diabetes can also help reduce the risk of secondary strokes. Of course, a healthy diet and not smoking also reduces your risks.





# COPD

COPD or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a condition of the bronchial tree of the lungs. It is the third leading cause of death in the US, with more than 130,000 men and women dying from the disease each year (Centers For Disease Control).

The vast majority of cases of COPD come from smoking. Smoking leads to inflammation of the bronchial tree, excessive mucus secretion, and damage to the bronchial tree. COPD is relatively common, affecting more than 11 million adults over the age of 18 (American Lung Association).



About twice that many have impairment of lung function suggestive of early lung disease or impending COPD. In spite of many measures taken by the government and other health agencies to curb the incidence of smoking, there are still many Americans who choose to smoke and many who suffer from COPD down the line.

Surprisingly, women suffer from COPD more than men do. This is partly because tobacco companies campaign for more women to smoke and because women use smoking to keep their weight down. Even so, the Centers For Disease Control reports that more than 64,000 males die from COPD each year, and many men are smoking despite the warnings that COPD is a common complication of smoking.

The prevalence of this disease varies according to where you live in the US. States like Washington and Minnesota have the least cases of COPD at 4% of the population.

States like Alabama and Kentucky see counts at 9% of the population. 92% of all cases of COPD are diagnosed in men and women over the age of 45.

Because there is a lag time between the start of smoking and getting COPD, efforts at smoking prevention need to be targeted at young people, as early as the early teens.

## Range Of COPD

- Some people with COPD have a “dry” form of the disease, with symptoms of wheezing and shortness of breath, especially on exertion. This is often referred to as emphysema.
- Others have a “wetter” form of the disease, with symptoms of cough and an increase in thick mucus production. This is often called chronic bronchitis.

Women have twice the likelihood of being diagnosed with chronic bronchitis when compared to men. More than 6.8 million women or 56.7 out of a thousand people have COPD, whereas less than half of that number is men.

Men historically have a higher rate of emphysema as opposed to chronic bronchitis but now women are getting emphysema at high enough rates to exceed men.

## Causes

The main cause of COPD is smoking, with 80% of COPD patients who die have their disease caused by smoking. Men are twelve times as likely to die from emphysema if they smoke as opposed to those who never smoked.

### Other causes of emphysema include:

- Air pollution
- Secondhand smoke
- Occupational chemicals
- Occupational dust
- History of childhood lung infections
- Low socioeconomic status
- Alpha antitrypsin deficiency disease—this is an inherited condition in which the person lacks a protein called alpha 1 antitrypsin or alpha 1 protease inhibitor. These are lung protectants that, when absent, contribute to about 2-3% of cases of emphysema per year in the US. It affects more people from Northern European descent than other races and is passed as an autosomal recessive disease onto their children. There are about 116

million carriers of the disease throughout the world. Smoking exacerbates their condition and they often get the disease under the age of 40.

## Symptoms

Most men with COPD do not develop symptoms until their lungs are clearly damaged. The symptoms tend to worsen over time, especially when a man fails to stop smoking.

The main symptoms of COPD include:

- Chronic cough/increased sputum production
  - Shortness of breath with exertion
  - Tightness in the chest
  - Wheezing
  - Clearing your throat of phlegm every morning
  - Clear, yellow, white, or green sputum
  - Cyanosis or bluish discoloration, especially around the lips or nailbeds
  - Decreased energy levels
  - Recurrent respiratory infections
  - Weight loss, particularly when the disease is late in its progression
  - Varying amount of symptoms with exacerbations and improvements coming over time.
- An exacerbation of COPD can last for several days and may mean a hospitalization for respiratory treatments.

## Treatment Options

The first thing to do in order to treat COPD is to stop smoking. Other treatments include the use of beta-agonist bronchial dilators that help with wheezing and steroid inhalers to decrease the inflammation of the bronchial tree. Oral or injectable steroids are used for exacerbations of COPD and oxygen is a common treatment of the shortness of breath caused by the disease.

## Impact Of COPD

COPD can affect a man's ability to work. This is true in about half of all cases, where a man is limited in his ability to find work because of COPD.

The American Lung Association reports that normal physical exertion becomes difficult in 70% of cases. About 56% of men are unable to do household chores because of COPD and half of all men with COPD have limitations in social activities, sleeping, and family activities.

The total cost to the US in the treatment of COPD is about \$50 billion USD. About \$30 billion USD are used to treat the disorder while the rest of the money is spend on direct and indirect morbidity and mortality costs.

**So, are you still smoking?**

# Diabetes

Because of an increase in obesity among men, there has been a great increase in men suffering from type 2 diabetes. Men don't often see a doctor unless they feel something is wrong so they stand a greater chance when compared to women of having serious consequences of diabetes before they are actually diagnosed with the disease.

Diabetes is a condition of high blood sugar. In type 2 diabetes, diabetes is from a condition called "insulin resistance" in which the cells of the body do not take up glucose from the bloodstream for use as fuel. The cells are starved of fuel and the blood sugar rises.

**This can lead to many end organ diseases, such as:**

- Kidney failure (diabetic nephropathy)
- Eye disease (diabetic retinopathy)
- Heart disease
- Peripheral neuropathy (diabetic neuropathy)



## Diagnosing Diabetes in Men

The easiest way to diagnose a man with diabetes is to get a fasting blood sugar test. This test should show fasting blood sugars of under 100 mg/dL. If the number is between 100 and 125 mg/dL, the individual has "pre-diabetes." If the fasting blood sugar is greater than 125 mg/dL, the individual has diabetes.

Another way to check for diabetes is to check a hemoglobin A1C level, which measures the amount of sugar on red blood cells. If the number is less than 5.5, you don't have diabetes. If the number is greater than 5.5, diabetes is likely. This is a non-fasting test that is also used to follow the treatment of diabetes.



## Diabetic Ketoacidosis

Men sometimes do not see a doctor until they fall into diabetic ketoacidosis. This is a condition of extremely high blood sugars and the breakdown of fats to make ketones. There are ketones in the blood and urine and the condition can be so severe as to lead to coma. Men who do not seek medical attention on a regular basis run the risk of going undiagnosed until they suffer from end organ disease such as a heart attack or diabetic ketoacidosis. Both of these are severe complications that can be allayed if the man sees a doctor regularly for screening tests.

## Symptoms Of Type 2 Diabetes

Diabetes has few symptoms until it is severe. Some symptoms of diabetes include:

- Burning of the feet
- Having to urinate often
- Extreme thirst
- Feeling hungry even when eating enough
- Blurred vision
- Cuts that are slow to heal
- Numbness or tingling of the feet
- Feeling very tired
- Losing weight without trying

## Risk Factors

According to the Centers for Disease Control, boys born in 2000 have an astounding 1 in 3 chance of developing diabetes in their lifetimes; a lot of this is due to the alarming obesity rates in the United States. Men are at risk for type 2 diabetes if they have a strong family history of diabetes. They are at risk if they are obese and eat a lot of high sugar, processed foods. A lack of exercise can contribute to getting diabetes. There is sugar in alcoholic beverages so being an alcoholic can put a man at risk of getting type 2 diabetes. In general, a diabetic male profile is a couch potato who eats too much and likes sweets, and who is obese with a family history of other members of the family suffering from diabetes as well.

## Treatment Options

Type 2 diabetes can be treated with medication that improves insulin resistance. This includes medications like metformin and other pills that act to help the cells take in blood sugar more easily. There are injectable medications, such as Victoza and Byetta, which work to bring blood sugar down. Insulin is used in severe cases in which the pancreas has begun to fail from overload and being pressed for too long to put out insulin.

Things like diet and exercise to bring down the weight can go a long way in returning the blood sugar to normal. If this is not done and diabetes is left unchecked, many end organ diseases can occur, including heart attacks, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease that may or may not be able to be easily treated.

The best way to manage diabetes in men is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. While family history cannot be changed, men who keep up some form of aerobic exercise to keep their weight in check tend to do better and stave off a diagnosis of diabetes altogether.

# Depression And Suicide In Men

Men have a difficult time with depression because they feel they have to be in control and strong—controlling their emotions all the time. When men feel the typical feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, they cover up these feelings by behaving recklessly, getting angry or drinking too much. While you might think that depression in men is uncommon, it is actually very common. The National Institutes of Health estimate that 6 million men are affected by depression and suicidal thoughts every year.

Depression is a treatable health problem affecting men of all backgrounds. Besides the man who suffers from the condition, the whole family is affected—children, family members, wives, and close friends. Depression doesn't just affect the mind. It can lead to physical conditions, such as heart disease and chronic medical conditions.



Depression is worse than the normal dips in mood everyone faces. It involves recurrent or unrelenting feelings of hopelessness or despair that influence all aspects of your life—from work, to family relationships, to free time. You simply can't enjoy life as well when you are depressed.

## Depression In Men Is Overlooked

A man's experience with depression has a high likelihood of being overlooked. Men don't talk about their feelings as much as women do. Instead, they experience physical symptoms like headaches, sleep deprivation, back pain, and sexual difficulties. This often results in under-treatment of depression in men. It means that men are not often identified as being depressed until it reaches a point of suicide.

Men have a lesser tendency to commit suicide when compared to women but they are more likely to be successful at a suicide attempt than women are. This is because they use things like guns to commit suicide and are less likely to take pills, which has a higher rate of survival.

## Symptoms Of Depression

Men who experience depression may have the typical symptoms of sadness, being withdrawn, and hopelessness with a loss of interest in activities and friends that used to interest them. They can also be much more irritable and aggressive than women are who are depressed. Depressed men drink more and suffer from compulsive working behaviors. They engage in high risk activities while depressed.

Many men don't recognize their own symptoms of depression, often denying their feelings. Instead, depressed men will complain about the following:

- **Physical pain:** Men will complain of headaches, sleep disturbances, erectile dysfunction, and backaches. They may have digestive difficulties that don't respond, as they should to the usual treatment.
- **Anger:** Men who are depressed are often angry and irritable. Some resort to violence, becoming abusive to their spouses or picking fights with others. They become controlling and difficult to live with.
- **Reckless behavior:** Men try to escape their depressed feelings by engaging in dangerous and risky behavior. They may suffer from compulsive gambling, drug abuse, or driving while drinking.
- **Blaming others:** While women blame themselves and feel guilty, men often blame others and are angry at everyone around them
- **Feel suspicious:** Instead of being anxious and afraid, men become paranoid, guarded, and suspicious. They don't trust others and this makes it hard to get help.

## Causes Of Depression In Men

Like women, men can have many causes to their depression. Many factors—both biological and environmental—play a role in who gets depressed and who does not.

### Common Causes Of Depression In Men Include:

- Relationship difficulties
- Stress at home, work or school
- Changing life circumstances
- Failure to reach goals
- Having constant financial difficulty
- Recently stopping smoking
- A recent death in the family
- Overwhelming responsibilities
- Loss of independence through retirement



## Treating Depression In Men

Men need as much treatment as women when it comes to treating depression. Care can come in the form of psychotherapy that is done on a weekly basis. Cognitive-behavioral therapy works especially well in patients who are depressed.

Antidepressants can also help men who have depression, even though one of the side effects is erectile dysfunction. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs are good medications to try to reduce the physiological reasons behind being depressed.

## Lifestyle Changes And Depression

Sometimes lifestyle changes can improve depression in men. This means getting regular exercise, eating better, avoiding alcohol and drugs, and stopping smoking. Men with depression should try to get enough sleep and reduce the amount of stress in their lives, if possible.

Men should try to build up their social network in order to reduce the amount of social isolation they feel. Sometimes it means getting together with friends on a regular basis and sometimes it means joining a group for men who have depression. Men need as much social support as women when it comes to depression so they can learn ways of expressing themselves and overcoming the feelings of being so alone in their depressed thoughts.



## Men And Alcohol

While both men and women drink alcohol, there is evidence that men and women consume alcohol differently. Men are more likely to binge drink and to drink to the point of drunkenness. More men are charged with driving while intoxicated than women and are more likely to engage in risky behavior while drinking.

Drinking in itself is not necessarily considered bad, the problems occur when drinking is in excess. Many sources recommend that men drink no more than two alcoholic beverages per day (and one for women) and that this may lead to health benefits, particularly for the heart. The problem is that many men do not stop at two alcoholic beverages per day and end up drinking much more than that—during sporting events, when out at the bar, or enjoying time with friends. Alcohol becomes a social lubricant that is taken in excess.



**This can actually be detrimental to your health, even if you aren't a true and true alcoholic.**

Some men may need to disengage from alcohol altogether, especially if they cannot stop at two or do not recognize the risks of drinking too much. Too many men die from alcohol-related crashes or other alcohol-related injuries because they didn't stop at the recommended two beverages per day and got themselves so intoxicated that they suffered an impairment in judgment.

The other health disadvantages of drinking too much include an increased risk of liver disease, peptic ulcer disease, heart disease, and emotional difficulties such as excessive anxiety or depression.

## **Male Drinking Habits**

In actuality, the consumption of alcohol is one of the more serious issues regarding men's health. Because of the tendency to binge drink, alcohol consumption often leads to greater problems in drinking than occurs in women.

What is the definition of "binge drinking"? Binge drinking, according to the CDC, is the consumption of 4-5 alcoholic beverages within a two-hour period of time. This level of drinking nearly always leads to a blood alcohol level that exceeds the legal limit for driving of 0.8.

Men binge drink much more than women so that a night out with the boys is more likely to lead to driving while intoxicated or even being a pedestrian while intoxicated—something that can lead to death even though it is technically not illegal.

The average man is believed to binge drink much too often. In a CDC survey, 62% of all men reported alcohol consumption within the prior thirty days and 47% indicated that they engaged in binge drinking during that time. The average man admitted to about 12 to 13 binge-drinking episodes in any given year. This is compared to 2 to 3 similar episodes for women in a given year.

## **Binge Drinking And Alcoholism**

Just because a man binge drinks, doesn't mean he is an alcoholic or even that he is alcohol dependent. There is a relationship, however, between binge drinking and alcoholism and the incidence of alcoholism is greater among men when compared to women. According to the Centers For Disease Control, 17% of men meet the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives, versus only 8% of women.

## **The Negative Effects Of Alcohol**

Alcohol has long and short-term health effects. Over the short haul, alcohol is known to impair decision-making and judgment. This why men have a greater rate of alcohol-related deaths and injuries directly related to poor decision-making while drunk. Men are twice as likely to have an

alcohol-related crash when compared to women. Other risky behavior includes getting into fights, choosing to sexually assault a woman, having sex with those he does not know and risk of suicide while drinking.

There are long-term effects of drinking as well. According to the American Institute of Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund, drinking excessively over a long period of time can increase a man's chances of getting colon cancer, liver cancer, mouth cancer, esophageal cancer, throat cancer, cirrhosis of the liver and other chronic conditions. Statistics tell us that 3% of cancer deaths throughout the world are directly linked to alcohol intake.



The long-term use of alcohol to excess can lead to liver failure, other liver-related diseases, and heart attacks.

Besides physical ailments, alcohol use has been related to neurotic diseases, anxiety disorders, and depression. Even in men who are not alcoholic, there can be memory impairment of long-term memory in men who drink alcohol.

## **Is Alcohol Healthy At All?**

Considering the severe impact of alcohol consumption on men's health, one might think it is better not to consume alcohol at all. Certainly, if you have a family history of cancer, diabetes, or existing heart disease, the doctor may advise you to skip drinking altogether. There are many medications that don't mix with alcohol and these should be avoided together at all times, according to the doctor's recommendation.

If, on the other hand, a man can control his consumption of alcohol, this mild to moderate amount of drinking has its benefits. Men in Europe, for example, who drink no more than two glasses of wine per day, have health benefits beyond that which is seen in men who do not drink at all. Some claim it has to do with the antioxidants found in red wine; however, the same beneficial effect of alcohol is seen when drinking certain beers and other types of liquor. It may have to do with the quantity of alcohol consumed and not on the type of alcohol consumed in the first place.

When we talk of drinking in moderation, we have to admit there is a difference between drinking 1-2 alcoholic beverages each night and storing up these drinks to be consumed all on the same night in any given week. There is a risk factor in drinking many beverages of alcohol at once, which negates the idea of drinking in moderation. Men who can truly drink a couple of alcoholic beverages per day and don't binge drink at any point will live longer and healthier lives than men who choose to drink in excess.

# Influenza And Pneumonia Among Men

Men are struck down by the millions every year with influenza and pneumonia, especially if they have underlying risk factors for these diseases. Influenza comes from a virus that affects the upper and lower respiratory tract and causes fever that lasts in excess of a week in many cases. Pneumonia is a common complication of influenza.

Pneumonia can be viral, bacterial, or fungal and comes when there is infection to already damaged areas of lung from smoking, influenza, asthma, and COPD, among other respiratory and non-respiratory diseases.

## Risk Factors

While healthy men can get these diseases, they often arise out of having some other lung disease or chronic disease that affects immunity.



Common risk factors for these respiratory illnesses include the following:

- **Failure to get a flu shot** - this is an annual recommendation that many men fail to do because it means a trip to the doctor or pharmacy to become injected. Many men feel they are too busy to get a flu shot and don't think they have a chance of getting the condition.
- **COPD** - having underlying lung disease from smoking can increase the risk of both influenza and pneumonia
- **Smoking history**—the respiratory cilia are damaged from smoking so pneumonia is more likely.
- **Diabetes mellitus** - this common disease affects the immune system so you get infectious diseases like influenza and pneumonia more often.
- **CHF** - this is also referred to as congestive heart failure, which is a common complication of high blood pressure, heart disease, and elevated lipids. When the heart doesn't work well, it allows more fluid to be in the lungs. This fluid can easily become infected with respiratory pathogens, both viral and bacterial.

- **AIDS** - Men with HIV disease like AIDS suffer from a poor immune system and an increased likelihood of getting respiratory infections that are viral, fungal, or bacterial in nature.
- **Sickle cell anemia** - men with this disease are chronically anemic and do not fight off pathogens as well as those with normal blood parameters.
- **Cancer** - this can affect your immune system so you don't fight off infections as well and are at a higher risk of getting viruses and bacteria in the lungs.

## Symptoms

Symptoms can come on suddenly or over a few days' time. In most cases, you develop fever and weakness. In influenza, you can get a high fever in excess of 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Cough and lung congestion are common along with body aches.

If the influenza progresses to pneumonia, you tend to get increased thick yellowish or greenish sputum, worsened cough, weakness, chills, and cough, which is productive of sputum. In both diseases, there can be shortness of breath at rest or on exertion. Influenza tends to be self-limiting with recovery in 7-10 days. Pneumonia lasts longer with recovery dependent on how quickly you get on the correct antibiotic.

## Treatment

Influenza can usually be avoided altogether by getting the influenza vaccine each year. If you are not vaccinated or if the vaccine doesn't work, you can treat influenza with Tamiflu, which can lessen the time you get symptoms of influenza. You can also treat influenza symptomatically, by taking antipyretics like acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®). You can also use things like naproxen (Naprosyn®), which fight the aches and pains of having influenza.

If influenza turns into pneumonia, the treatment usually involves giving antibiotic, although some people need nebulizer treatments or other asthma treatments to open the airways and allow the lung secretions to be able to be coughed out. The choice of antibiotic can be anything from penicillin-derived antibiotics, to erythromycin-based antibiotics to things like clindamycin or

ciprofloxacin. The choice of antibiotics can be based on sputum cultures or empiric, broad-spectrum antibiotics can be chosen in the hopes that they resolve the infection.

## **Complications Of Influenza And Pneumonia**

Younger people recover fairly well from both influenza and pneumonia with appropriate treatment. Older men with underlying health conditions are less likely to recover, even with appropriate treatment. Influenza pneumonia and bacterial pneumonia can lead to death from overwhelming infection and sepsis.

This is why it is important to be immunized against influenza and pneumococcus, the most common type of pneumonia. Getting these vaccinations can make all the difference in getting sick and avoiding these illnesses altogether.



# Low Testosterone In Men

The main male hormone is testosterone. It is produced by the testicles primarily, which is why the testosterone levels are so much higher in men than in women. Testosterone is important for male sexual health. It causes the male sex drive to be active and increases sperm production. Testosterone has other effects on the body as well and is responsible for the increase in bone mass and muscle mass in men when compared to women.

## Reduction In Testosterone

Testosterone production in men tends to decrease as a man ages. If it falls below the normal range of 300 to 1000 ng/dL, it is called “Low T syndrome” and men experience symptoms related to not having as much testosterone in their system.

Doctors can measure a man’s testosterone level by assessing a serum testosterone level. This test is able to detect the amount of circulating testosterone in the male serum. Many symptoms can occur out of

having low T syndrome, some of which are not very obvious. This means that, if a man suspects he might have low T syndrome, he should see an internist or family practice physician to have the serum testosterone level checked.

There are things that can be done to improve the level of testosterone and relieve the man of his symptoms. Low T syndrome is also called male hypogonadism and it is completely treatable once diagnosed.



## The Main Symptoms Of Low T Syndrome

- **Decreased sex drive:** A man with low T syndrome often feels less of a desire to have sex. Interestingly, this is a common reason for low libido in women as well. When it happens in either sex, low T syndrome can reduce your desire to have sex in the first place.
- **Erectile dysfunction:** Testosterone is necessary for a man to have and sustain an erection. Testosterone is just part of what helps a man get an erection. It is known to stimulate cells within the brain to cause them to produce nitric oxide. It is actually the nitric oxide deficiency that leads to erectile dysfunction but without testosterone, there would be inadequate amounts of nitric oxide. Low T syndrome is just one part of what it takes to achieve an erection but is part of the work up for erectile dysfunction.
- **Decreased semen volume:** A man needs testosterone to produce enough semen. Semen is the fluid in which sperm live in at the time of ejaculation. The greater the amount of testosterone, the more semen is produced. If testosterone levels are low, there will be a decrease in the amount of semen in the ejaculate. This may or may not have a significant effect on fertility.
- **Hair loss:** While going bald can be a normal part of the aging process, having low T syndrome can affect the amount of hair found on the body and in the facial area.
- **Energy levels:** Low T syndrome can affect a man's level of physical and mental energy. He may be tired out more and may want to sleep in excess of what he normally slept. There may also be a decrease in general energy levels so that the man feels extra lazy and worn out. He may confuse this as being a normal part of the aging process.
- **Decrease in muscle strength:** Testosterone is required to help a man develop strong muscles and bones. Without testosterone, there can be a visible loss of muscle strength and atrophy of the muscles. Even with weight training, it can be hard to build up the muscle stores and the man may feel weaker than normal.
- **Increased body fat:** Men can develop extra fat because of low testosterone levels. They can also develop gynecomastia or enlarged breasts from an excess of fat and an

imbalance between the levels of estrogen and the levels of testosterone in the body.

Testosterone is believed to have an impact on the way the body stores fat in fat cells.

- **Decreased Bone Density:** While osteoporosis is considered a woman's disease, men with Low T syndrome can lose bone mass to the point of getting osteoporosis. This causes an increase in fractures with minimal falls.
- **Changes in mood:** Men experience mood changes similar to female menopause when the levels of testosterone drop. Testosterone affects the mental capacity of men who are likely to have episodes of irritability, a loss of focus, and depression when their testosterone levels are too low.

## Treatment Options

Men can reverse their low T syndrome through replacement of testosterone given by an injection, lozenge, patch, or gel. Because testosterone is a hormone, it doesn't survive well in the acidity of the stomach so that it must be replaced by means that bypass the stomach.

## Sperm Count Health

When a man has a low sperm count, it means that the number of sperm in the male ejaculate is less than normal. This condition is also called oligospermia, where there is less than 15 million sperm per ml of semen.

If there is no sperm in the ejaculate, the condition is called azoospermia. It means that fertility is decreased and it may take longer to conceive a child, even under the best of circumstances.

There are no real symptoms of oligospermia. The only sign that this condition exists is the inability to conceive after about a year of trying. There are many causes of oligospermia, some of which can be corrected with the right treatment.



A low sperm count can be related to having pain in the testicles or a lump from a varicocele. It can also be related to erectile dysfunction or having a low sex drive. If a man has decreased body hair or decreased facial hair, he may have a chromosomal abnormality or a problem with testosterone that contributes to having a low sperm count.

## When To Seek Medical Attention

A man should see a doctor about having a low sperm count if he is unable to conceive a child after a year of actively trying. He should see the doctor sooner if there is an erectile dysfunction, problems with ejaculation, a lump in the testicle or scrotum, a history of prostate problems or previous surgery on the testicle, penis, and scrotum or groin area.

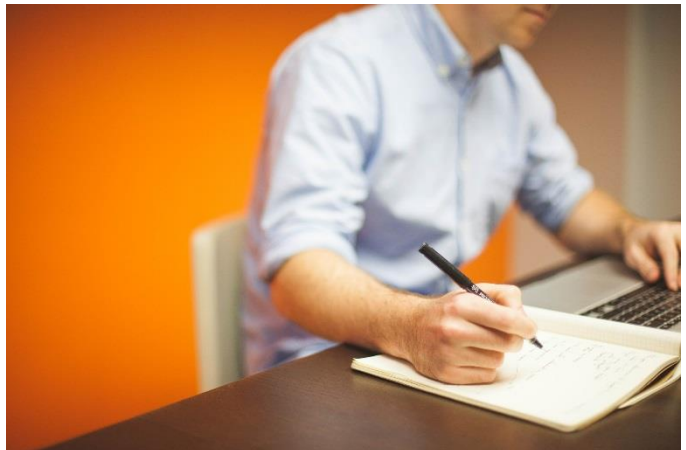
## The Production Of Sperm

Sperm production is a complicated process that depends on having a normal pituitary gland, a normal hypothalamus, and pair of normal testicles. Sperm are made in the testicles and are mixed with fluids from the prostate gland and seminal vesicles to create an ejaculate that ideally makes for the right environment for sperm to travel upon ejaculation into the female. If any one of these areas of the body is malfunctioning, the sperm will not be optimal. Besides having a low sperm count, a man can have normal amounts of sperm, but the sperm are abnormal in appearance or are slow moving. This contributes to infertility.

## Causes Of Low Sperm Count

There can be many reasons why a man would suffer from a low sperm count:

- **Varicocele:** This involves varicose veins of the veins in the testicle. It causes a rise in temperature in the scrotum, which results in a low sperm count. Fortunately, this is a completely treatable form of male infertility and is relatively easy to identify as it shows up as a lump that is squishy in the scrotum.
- **Infection:** Certain STDs can cause scarring that interferes with the passage of sperm through the vas deferens, the main tube that transports sperm out of the testicle. Epididymitis or orchitis and infections like HIV and gonorrhea can decrease sperm production.
- **Retrograde ejaculation:** This can occur when the sperm go backwards from the vas deferens into the bladder rather than going out of the urethra. Retrograde ejaculation



can be caused by spinal injury, bladder surgery, surgery of the prostate, diabetes, or urethral surgery.

- **Anti-Sperm Antibodies:** Anti-sperm antibodies involve having immune cells that attack a man's own sperm. Both men and women can have anti-sperm antibodies.
- **Cancer:** Cancer and other tumors of the male reproductive system can cause reduced sperm count. Treatment of these diseases, such as radiation, surgery, or chemo can also adversely affect male fertility.
- **Undescended testicles:** If a man has an undescended testicle and it is not put back in proper position early in life, the testicle becomes damaged because of the high temperature in the body so that it will put out less sperm.
- **Hormonal difficulties:** If any of the organs that produce hormones related to sperm production are damaged or nonfunctioning, this can affect sperm production.
- **Blocked passages:** If any of the tubes that carry sperm are damaged, sperm production can be diminished.
- **Chromosome abnormalities:** Men with Klinefelter's syndrome have an extra X chromosome and are infertile. Other similar genetic diseases affect sperm production.
- **Celiac Disease:** Men with gluten sensitivity will have temporary reductions in sperm count that returns to normal after gluten is avoided.

Environmental causes of low sperm count include exposure to industrial chemicals, heavy metal exposure, history of irradiation, and overheating of the testicles. Men should watch their drug and alcohol intake to maximize their sperm count. Tobacco smoking, obesity, and emotional stress can contribute to having a low sperm count.

## Semen Analysis

A low sperm count can be detected through having a semen analysis. A sample of semen is taken after masturbation and is evaluated under the microscope. If the level is low or if there is low sperm motility, this can affect a man's ability to fertilize an egg. Sperm counts less than 15

million sperm per ml are considered too low. Sometimes several analyses must be done over time to fully assess the sperm count.

## **Treatment Of Low Sperm Count**

A low sperm count can be reversed by treating infections and by doing surgery to remove a varicocele. Some men need counseling or medications to improve erectile dysfunction.

Hormonal therapy may be necessary and a couple may have to undergo assisted reproductive technology such as intrauterine insemination (IUI) or in vitro fertilization.

# Erectile Dysfunction

Erectile dysfunction, also called “ED,” involves a man’s inability to get or sustain an erection that is satisfactory for sexual intercourse. There are many causes of erectile dysfunction, some of which are psychological and some of which are physiological.

## What Is ED?

ED involves a lack of ability to get an erection or to sustain one long enough to complete an act of intercourse. ED is very common, affecting about five % of men around the age of 40 and between 15-25% of men around the age of 65.

Erectile dysfunction can be sporadic, such as when a man is very tired or drinks too much; it can also be constant and relatively permanent. If a man cannot get an erection 20% of the time or less, this is considered within normal limits. If it affects an erection more than 50% of the time, it is considered serious enough to require treatment.



## Causes Of ED

Common causes of erectile dysfunction are things that adversely affect the blood flow to the penis. This can happen when the veins leak too much or when a man has blockage of the arteries leading to the penis. Psychological issues, including depression, stress, and anxiety around having an erection can contribute to getting ED. Men with Peyronie’s disease have a curved penis and can suffer from erectile dysfunction as a result.



Common diseases that contribute to getting erectile dysfunction include:

- **Diabetes:** this can damage the blood vessels and nerves leading to the penis.
- **Kidney disease:** this can cause a hormonal imbalance and can interfere with blood flow to the penis.
- **Neurological disorders:** this includes things like stroke, Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease
- **Vascular disorders:** this includes things like atherosclerosis and high cholesterol
- **Prostate cancer:** it is usually the treatment and not the disease itself that leads to ED.
- **Surgery:** this includes surgery to the bladder or prostate that can damage nerves, leading to ED.
- **Injuries:** trauma to the bladder, spinal cord, pelvis, and penis can cause erectile dysfunction.
- **Hormonal abnormalities:** low T syndrome for example causes lower than normal levels of testosterone, which leads to erectile dysfunction.
- **Venous leak:** there can be a leak in the veins that stiffen during an erection, causing failure of an erection to last.
- **Tobacco, drug abuse, or alcohol:** All three of these things can cause damage to the blood vessels of the penis so that erections cannot occur.
- **Prescription drugs:** there are hundreds of prescription drugs that lead to erectile dysfunction.
- **Prostatic enlargement:** an enlarged prostate can affect erections, especially in older men.

### Erectile Dysfunction Is Related To Lifestyle

Many lifestyle factors play into getting erectile dysfunction. Some of these include the following:

- **Smoking** - Smoking increases the risk of atherosclerosis so that blood flow to the penis is reduced. If a man quits smoking, some of the erectile dysfunction will resolve.

- **Being overweight** - If you are overweight, you are more likely to suffer from ED. This is because it can affect the blood flow to the penis.
- **Sedentary lifestyle** - It has been shown than men who undergo regular exercise have a reduced risk of erectile dysfunction.
- **Diabetes** - If diabetes is uncontrolled, this can affect the nerves and blood vessels leading to the penis.
- **High cholesterol** - This can adversely affect the blood vessels of the penis.
- **Alcohol abuse** - Drinking more than two alcoholic beverages per day can contribute to ED.
- **Illegal drug use** - The use of cocaine, marijuana, and other illegal drugs can damage the blood vessels leading to the penis, causing erectile dysfunction.
- **Anxiety and stress** - This can temporarily contribute to erectile dysfunction by inhibiting relaxation.

## Treatment Options

Erectile dysfunction can be managed with lifestyle changes in some cases. Other times, men need medication such as Cialis and Viagra to increase nitric acid levels in the penis, which is what helps an erection happen. There are also things like penile implants, vacuums, and pumps, which can help men who need added help to have an erection.

Lifestyle changes are where a man should start first as these can work without having to resort to surgery or medication for erectile dysfunction.

**Some lifestyle changes that can improve one's ability to have an erection include:**

- **Quitting smoking:** While this can be very hard to do, it can reverse some of the changes associated with erectile dysfunction.
- **Get regular exercise:** This can lower blood pressure, strengthen the heart, reduce body fat, improve sleep, and cause less stress in your life. This can improve one's ability when it comes to getting a normal erection.

- **Reduce stress:** Learn ways of relaxing such as meditation, guided imagery, yoga, and Tai chi. These can help improve your outlook and the lack of stress will improve your ability to have an erection.
- **Quit Drinking:** Alcohol can contribute to erectile dysfunction. If you stick to fewer than 2 drinks per night on a regular basis, you will improve your erectile function.

# Stress And Men's Health

Stress in men can strongly affect their physical and mental health.

Sources of stress in men include the following:

- Relationship stressors
- Job stressors
- Financial stressors
- Family stressors
- Everyday stressors such as commuting to and from work

When men do not handle stress well, it can contribute to many different symptoms.

Men can experience mental and emotional symptoms of: depression, anxiety, and anger.



There can also be physical stress-related conditions including high blood pressure, elevated steroid levels resulting in high blood sugar, and heart disease.

## How Men Handle Stress

Men often handle stress by engaging in behaviors that temporarily make them feel better but add to the overall stress level. They engage in drinking too much to handle the stress, gambling, risky behaviors, and other activities that temporarily put a dent in the amount of stress they are feeling. Unfortunately, things like drinking and gambling are not healthy substitutes for stress and they don't make the stress go away.

Stress may seem to be a never-ending battle that a man fights daily. Men often put themselves through stressors feeling as though they are strong enough to handle it or that men shouldn't be

affected by stress. The stress can be addicting so that it becomes a cycle of stress, temporary stress relief, and more stress. Men aren't as good as women when it comes to seeking the help of others when it comes to particular stressors so they often try to handle it alone, believing that "macho" men can handle any type of stressor. It's only when stress leads to serious consequences that it all comes to a grinding halt and the man finally realizes the impact that stress has had on the body and mind.

## Effects Of Stress

Stress involves the development of physical and emotional sequelae. Physically and emotionally, there is sleep deprivation, eating poorly, anger episodes, depressive symptoms, and chronic anxiety that are ways men deal with stress. These things lead to high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, which include stroke, heart attack, and peripheral vascular disease.

Alcoholism can be related to trying to cope with stress.

Alcoholism, when left untreated, can lead to upper gastrointestinal bleeding from esophageal varices, liver damage, and liver cancer.



Elevated cortisol levels from the adrenal gland's response to stress can lead to high blood sugar and diabetes. Elevated epinephrine and norepinephrine levels are part of the "fight or flight" response to stress.

When epinephrine and norepinephrine remain elevated, it causes rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, shunting of blood to the muscles, and rapid respiratory rate. Together this can make a man feel anxious or angry all the time and can adversely affect the heart in the long run.

## Dealing With Stress

Men are often reluctant to deal with stress because they have biases against stress reduction techniques. Even so, things like meditation and guided imagery can be practiced at home or even while driving so that the perception of stress is reduced.

Men can also engage in physical activity, which can be aerobic exercises like running, biking, or anaerobic exercises like weight lifting. These forms of physical activity can release some of the excess stress and can help improve the state of the body as well.

Milder forms of exercise like Tai chi and yoga can be very relaxing, and can reduce anxiety and feelings of stress.

Men can make better use of healthy friendships in the quest to reduce stress. Friends who will listen to the stress you are under can help dissipate some of the stress.

Women tend to use friendships for stress relief more than men do but, when men are selective about their friendships and have friends that are much more than “drinking buddies” are, they can avoid some of the negative impact that stress has on the mind and body so that life goes easier and without negativity.

# Workplace Health and Safety Issues

Men are at a greater risk of problems related to the workplace. In one study, it was found that while men worked at 53.7% of the estimated total 137.7 million jobs in the year 2002, they also accounted for 92% of the 5,524 fatal work-related injuries. What accounts for this striking disparity?

## Breakdown Of Job Descriptions

Men are more likely to work in industrial jobs, construction work, and factory work that cause a greater amount of injuries in the employees. While one is rarely injured in a desk job, the fatality and severe injury rate goes way up if you work in industrial areas, roadside crews, construction, and heavy equipment jobs, which are traditionally jobs held by males.

Office jobs, jobs in restaurants, retail jobs, and jobs as teachers are most commonly held by women, where the rate of injury and death is considerably less. This breakdown of job descriptions reveals that the types



of jobs men have are different from those that women have. There is more physical activity, exposure to the elements, and job-related injuries in jobs that are traditionally male-centered professions. This accounts for the main reason behind the high rate of injury and death among male workers.

## What The Workplace Can Do

In jobs involving industry, construction, factory work, or roadside employment, the workplace needs to practice injury-reduction programs so that there is less severe injury at the workplace. This involves breaking down the parts of the job and reducing injury rate at each specific step.

Some workplace injuries are unavoidable but many are avoidable with protective gear and changing the job description to involve fewer injuries.

Most workplaces have safety handbooks and take part in safety education for new and established workers. These handbooks have to be adhered to in order to minimize the degree of workplace injuries and deaths. Safety education is usually designed for the entire workplace to put an emphasis on the safety measures in place for the various job descriptions in the industry.

### **What The Worker Can Do**

Workers need to make sure they are not working while intoxicated, follow the rules of the workplace, and wear the protective equipment provided by their employer. Some men, unfortunately, don't feel as though

protective equipment is necessary and become unnecessarily injured by not following the rules about wearing protective equipment. They engage in risky behaviors at the workplace, often yielding injurious results. They become careless about using equipment such as

forklifts and nail guns, and are not careful when it comes to working in high places where a fall can be deadly.



### **About OSHA**

The Safety and Occupational Health Administration is responsible for ensuring workplace safety, fining those workplaces that fail to stand up to OSHA safety regulation. They also monitor all workplace deaths, noting deaths in men from being crushed by forklifts, electrocution, heat stress, and falls from high places while on the job. They use these data to create rules and regulations for better workplace safety and to punish those workplaces that fail to safely engage their workers in safety activities while doing work in their various occupations.



Whenever there is a workplace death or severe injury, they step in to determine causation and identify whether it is the worker or the workplace that caused the fatal accident. If it is the workplace that caused the injury or death, changes are made that might be industry wide or just related to the workplace.

Some workplace injuries are true accidents that occur when the workplace had the proper safety mechanisms in place and the worker followed the safety rules set out by the workplace. This is, unfortunately uncommon and usually one or both parties were at fault in the workplace injury. The goal of OSHA is to help improve the safety in all occupations and to reduce the rate of severe injury and death.

# Key Factors In Living A Healthy Life For Men

Men are not helpless when it comes to their health although, judging by the number of men who have health insurance, a regular doctor and who see their doctor regularly, one might think they are not in control of their health as much as women are.

Instead of seeing the doctor and being screened for health conditions, men often ignore preventive doctor visits, and only get medical care when something is really wrong with them. They don't get immunizations that could improve their health and they "tough out" illnesses that eventually go away in most cases but not without many days off work or problems with functionality at work.



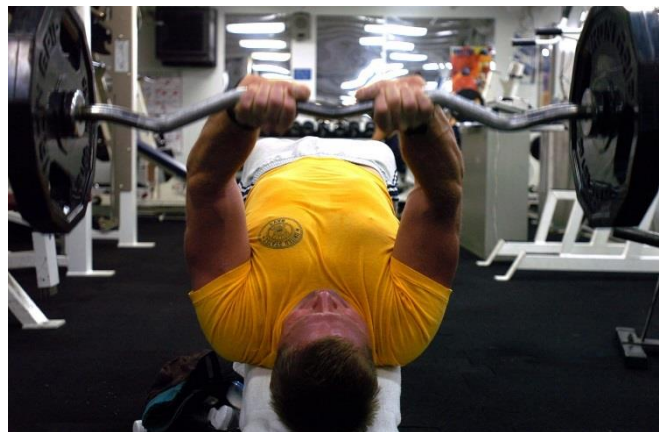
**The key factors in living a healthy life for men begins with taking charge of lifestyle behaviors that lead men to injuries and illnesses that could have been avoided.**

Here are some lifestyle changes that men could begin to do that would improve the status of their life and could perhaps prolong their life:

- **Get regular exercise** that includes interval training and/or cardio and muscle strength training
- **Decrease drinking behaviors:** Men who binge drink or drink regularly to excess not only run the risk of health conditions related to drinking but also run the risk of injuries and death due to risky behavior while drinking. Men are more likely to drink and drive when compared to women and are more likely to do things that put their lives at risk. This includes drinking to the point of alcohol intoxication, getting into fights, driving while

intoxicated, and being a pedestrian while drunk. Men who are drunk are less picky about their sexual partners and run the risk of getting STDs such as herpes, HIV, gonorrhea, and Chlamydia. These can ultimately affect their fertility and not all STDs are treatable. Things like herpes and HIV are lifelong and can contribute to a poor quality of life even though there are medications one can take to reduce the effect of the STD on the man's life.

- **Decrease smoking:** Smoking leads to lung cancer, heart attacks, strokes, COPD, and peripheral vascular disease. On a minor scale, smoking can contribute to erectile dysfunction and a poor sex life. Smoking is exceedingly addictive and, once a person starts smoking, it becomes very difficult to stop. A mild smoking habit can lead to a lifelong smoking addiction that shortens the life of just about every person who partakes in the habit. Fortunately, there are nicotine replacement substances that can improve the ability of a person to quit smoking for good.
- **De-stress your life:** Too many men suffer from excesses of stress brought on by poor relationships, money troubles, and work conflicts. This excess stress affects all areas of a man's health and can cause anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease. De-stressing your life involves getting more exercise, getting more sleep, eating healthier and participating in things like meditation that can reduce the perceived stressors in your life.
- **Stop the use of illicit drugs:** Men participate too much in the use of illicit drugs like cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin. These things can only bring down your life and can contribute to early deaths from injuries and illnesses. It can be difficult to stop some of these drugs because they are addictive. This is where going to treatment might be a good option, especially if you are addicted to a drug that requires a lot to come off of. There is no shame in going to treatment if it will help save your life.



- **See a doctor on a regular basis:** Men don't have to worry about Pap tests but they do have to consider being regularly screened for high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and diabetes. These things can be easily screened for along with specialized screening tests such as a colonoscopy, which is necessary starting at the age of 50.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Watching what you eat and eating a diet filled with fruits, whole grains and vegetables will help you lose weight and can improve the quality of your life. Eating to maintain a normal weight can take many illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers, off the table for the rest of your life.

# Healthy Diet For Men

While watching one's diet is one of the least favorite activities of many men, it just can be lifesaving. For example, the typical American diet is high in sodium, processed foods, fat, and sugar. For men, this means eating too much food that has been processed, fatty meats, and food high in sugar or sodium.

These kinds of diets can lead to diseases like diabetes, hyperlipidemia, heart disease, and high blood pressure.

## Eating A Healthy Diet

In order to avoid obesity and the diseases that go with it, men need to eat less processed meats, fewer pastries, and less food that has been processed before it comes to the grocery store. It means eating out less because portion sizes at restaurants are generally too high. Instead of these kinds of foods, a healthy diet for the average man should contain about 2500 high quality calories per day. Of course, calorie intake coincides with physical activity.



It should contain plenty of whole fruits, vegetables, whole grain foods, and limited amounts of lean meat and fish. Things like salami and other processed meats should be avoided, replacing them with healthy fish and meats that are grilled or baked.

At least half of a plateful of food should contain healthy vegetables, including green vegetables, cruciferous vegetables (like broccoli, kale, and cauliflower), highly colored vegetables like tomatoes and peppers, and fruits that are best eaten fresh, and whole. Whole fruits retain the

necessary fiber for blood sugar regulation and better bowel habits. Fruit juices are simply high sugar beverages and should be limited, especially if you have diabetes or are at risk for diabetes.

Men should eat in order to maintain a normal weight. This means having a body mass index of between 18 and 25. The body mass index can be calculated on the web by putting in your height and weight where indicated. You can also calculate your body mass index because it is the weight in pounds divided by the height in inches squared and multiplied by 703. A normal body weight can reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome, hypertension, and diabetes as well as several types of cancer.

## Benefits Of A Healthy Diet

There are many benefits to eating a healthy diet; here are three important considerations:

**Cancer Prevention:** Many cancer prevention protocols include following a healthy diet. When the body is given the nutrition it requires, it works at its best, maintains high levels of immunity, and protects its owner from disease.

**Type 2 Diabetes Prevention:** When the weight is maintained at normal levels, there is a decrease in the rate of diabetes, which is primarily a condition of obesity. Diets high in sugar put a man at risk for becoming diabetic. High sugar foods cause wide fluctuations in blood sugar and result in insulin resistance. In insulin resistance, the cells do not respond to the insulin put out by the pancreas. This leads to higher blood sugar levels. Excess sugar in the diet gets stored in the liver as glycogen and as fat in fat cells. It becomes a never-ending cycle with high blood sugar levels leading to more fat, which increases the risk of diabetes even more. Eating healthy carbs to keep the blood sugar stable and maintaining a healthy weight can stave off diabetes.



**Normal Blood Pressure:** High blood pressure is improved in men of normal weight and hyperlipidemia is improved. This lowers the risk of heart attacks, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease.

**Better Sperm Quality:** Research shows that a healthy diet results in sperm that is stronger and greater in number than in men who eat an unhealthy diet. Two recent studies have pointed out that men who eat fatty red meat and processed grains have impaired sperm function. Diets high in trans fats reduce the quantity of sperm, making them sluggish and less likely to fertilize an egg. Researchers point out those diets high in fresh fruit, whole grains, fish, vegetables and legumes result in sperm that moves faster than is true of poorer diets.

## **The Bottom Line**

Poor diets have multiple negative effects on health. While it can be difficult to suddenly change one's diet, especially with the ease of eating highly processed foods that are high in fat, gradual changes work best.

Gradual weight loss and making healthier choices in real whole food, like vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains reduces the risks of many types of diseases, including sperm concentration difficulties and problems with sperm motility.



# Key Medical Screenings For Men

There are just as many screening tests for men as there are for women. Some tests are related to the reproductive system while others are the same as for women. The screening tests are designed to diagnose a disease before the disease causes symptoms or end organ damage.

The primary screening tests for men include the following:

- **Screening for hypertension:** Hypertension has no symptoms until it becomes very severe. The only real way to screen for hypertension is to have the blood pressure taken at every sick or well visit. If the number is greater than 140/90 on a regular basis, it likely means that the man has essential hypertension and needs to be on medication for it. The incidence of hypertension tends to increase with age but there are cases of hypertension that occur as early as one's teen years.
- **Screening for hyperlipidemia:** Hyperlipidemia tends to be hereditary and can put a man at an increased risk for stroke, heart attack, and peripheral vascular disease. Hyperlipidemia is tested by a blood test, which provides the total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides. A fairly common condition if caught early enough, can prevent narrowing of the vasculature with cholesterol and calcium deposits. This can decrease one's risk of heart-related diseases. Hyperlipidemia can be managed with diet in mild cases but many men will end up on a cholesterol-lowering medication.
- **Screening for diabetes:** Diabetes is very common, especially among overweight individuals. Some diabetes is at least partly hereditary but it doesn't have to be. Diabetes





is evaluated by obtaining fasting blood sugar levels or by assessing the Hemoglobin A1c level. If elevated, the individual can lose weight, eat less sugar, and may need to be on medications for lowering the blood sugar. Exercise can help some people with diabetes lower the amount of medications they need.

- **Screening for metabolic syndrome:** Metabolic syndrome is on the rise in the US. It is a condition of truncal obesity, hypertriglyceridemia, diabetes, and hypertension. People with metabolic syndrome have a high risk of heart diseases like stroke, peripheral vascular disease, and heart attack. It is screened by evaluating a person's fatty locations, obtaining fasting triglycerides, the blood pressure, and the fasting blood sugar level.



People with metabolic syndrome do a great deal to reduce their risk by losing weight but many need medication to control the various components of the disease.

- **Prostate cancer screening:** At about the age of 40, men need to have digital rectal examinations for prostate enlargement or nodules indicative of possible prostate cancer. The incidence of prostate cancer increases with age so that many men will have the condition by the time they reach 80. Not every case of prostate cancer needs aggressive treatment but, for those with more aggressive disease, early detection can be lifesaving.
- **STD screening:** This is usually done on younger men who have more promiscuous sex lives. Men can be screened for gonorrhea and chlamydia, which can be silent diseases in men. For a full STD screen, the individual can be screened for HIV, herpes, and syphilis as well. Treatment includes medication like antibiotics or antiviral medication for some condition, while there is no treatment for other conditions. STDs can trigger scarring and

infertility in some cases so it is important to screen and treat for these diseases before permanent infertility results.

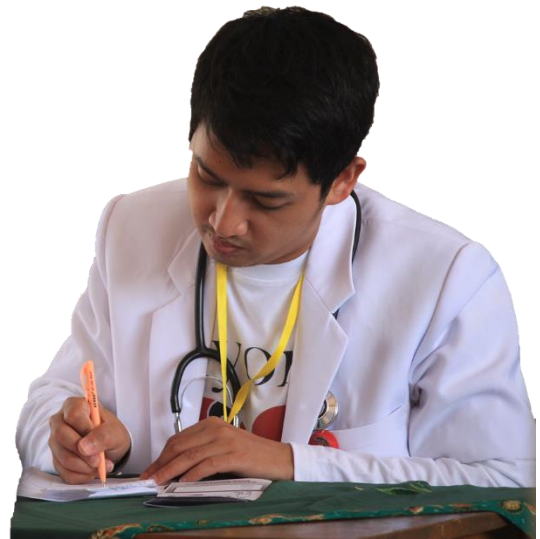
The tests that are screened for are not the same for every man. It depends on their age and their lifestyle in some cases.

In others, the problem can exist at any age so men of all ages need to be screened for them. The important thing is early detection before the problem leads to irreversible health problems.

# Key Factors In The Disconnect Between Men And Doctors

It is an unfortunate fact that men see a primary care physician less than women do. Women generally have a longstanding relationship with an OB/GYN doctor or family physician for management of things like birth control and having babies. They have been taught from an early age that Pap smears are necessary and see the doctor for this and other screening tests on a regular basis.

Men do not have a similar screening test and therefore feel they don't need to see the doctor for anything. Important screening tests like that for diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol, are missed unless a symptom comes up or a man needs to see a doctor for a work-related examination. For this and other reasons, men do not have a regular doctor and don't recognize the need to be seen when they feel well.



## Why The Disconnect?

Here are some reasons why men do not see doctors as often as they should:

- **Increase in risky behavior:** Men have a natural mindset toward risky behavior. Some of this has to do with alcohol and drug use and the rest of it has to do with socialization toward risky behavior. Not seeing the doctor is an example of taking a physical risk and ignoring the lifestyle factors and hereditary factors that could require a trip to the

physician. Unless they are sick, men don't see the need to share their lifestyle factors that contribute to disease and they don't recognize that heredity affects them, too.

- **A lack of understanding of heredity:** Men do not discuss their health issues as much, even with close relatives. This means that men do not know the various ailments of their father, mother, brothers, or sisters. Unless someone in the family is hospitalized or dies from their physical ailment, it is usually swept under the rug as something “macho” men do not talk about. Without this important genetic information, men don't know what they are prone to getting until they develop the problem themselves. This puts them at a great disadvantage when it comes to preventing disease.
- **Men do not have any “required” visits:** If a woman wants birth control, she must see the doctor and get screened for gynecological diseases at the very least. Often a simple visit for a Pap test leads to screening for things like hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and diabetes. Men do not have any required visits for things like birth control. This means they lose the opportunity to have the other screening tests that are necessary for the prevention of disease. It becomes easier to skip seeing the doctor altogether if there is nothing the man needs specifically from the doctor.
- **Lack of Health Insurance:** Many men work in jobs that do not offer them health insurance. This is especially true of low paying jobs that young men work at. Not only do they have a lack of health insurance but also they often cannot afford to see the doctor. This means that doctors are only seen in emergencies and often this means a trip to urgent care or an emergency department. Because there is no ongoing care provided by these places, the follow up of findings discovered in an emergency situation are rarely done. They go from emergency to emergency with no way to pay for routine health care.
- **Men have a greater denial about health issues:** Men tend to be in denial about many of their health issues because being sick is not “manly.” They ignore subtle signs of illness until the situation becomes more severe. This attitude is especially true of young men who could be screened for health illnesses before they become out of control.

What men need is health insurance, access to healthcare, and the understanding that many illnesses are occult in the early stages. If they knew the advantages of preventative health care, they would probably be more inclined to see the doctor before they actually develop symptoms of a chronic disease.