



Men's Health

RISKS, WARNING SIGNS & PREVENTION

On average men die five years earlier than women, they visit the doctor less, and are often more likely to have a serious condition by the time they do see their doctor.

It is important that men begin to prioritise their health more. Making healthy lifestyle choices, seeking early medical attention and getting the right preventive screenings and tests are vital. In this guide we explore the main threats to men's health and identify ways men can live healthier.

Leading causes of death in men

Men have higher death rates than women for all of the leading causes of death, with the exception of Alzheimer's disease.

This gender imbalance can be attributed to men's lifestyle choices and their approach to health. The majority of smokers are male; men are more likely to drink unhealthy levels of alcohol, use illegal drugs and have a poor diet. Men are also more likely than women to be exposed to occupational health hazards, and less likely to visit their doctor, especially for mental health problems.

Men must educate themselves more on the greatest risks to their health and understand that many chronic health conditions can be prevented.



Did you know?

Poor lifestyles are responsible for a high proportion of chronic diseases.



Heart disease is easier to treat when detected early. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms of heart disease, you have a family history of heart disease or you are concerned about your heart health, talk to your doctor about steps you can take to reduce your heart disease risk.

Heart Disease

Heart or cardiovascular disease refers to conditions related to the process of atherosclerosis, where plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries. This build up narrows the arteries, forcing the heart to work harder to pump blood, and potentially stopping blood flow if a clot forms.

Blocked blood vessels can lead to a heart attack, chest pain or stroke. Other heart conditions, such as those that affect the heart's muscle, valves or rhythm, also are considered forms of heart disease.

More men die from heart disease than women. Under age 65, three times more men than women die from heart attacks.

While many men may be unaware that they suffer from heart disease until a health incident occurs, there are red flags they should be aware of to better detect heart problems during the earliest and most treatable phases.

Possible symptoms

- Breathlessness after moderate exercise
- Chest pain
- Tiring easily
- Pain or tingling in the upper extremities
- Fluttering in the chest
- Light-headedness or dizziness

Risk factors

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes and prediabetes
- Smoking
- Being overweight or obese
- Being physically inactive
- Having a family history of early heart disease
- Unhealthy diet

Cancer

In general men have a higher probability of developing cancer than women, and are also more likely to die from the disease. The main reasons for this gender imbalance can be attributed to lifestyle factors and men being more likely to ignore symptoms and less willing to visit their doctor.

It is vital that men make themselves aware of the symptoms of common male cancers and understand the risk factors.



Did you know?

One third of the most common cancers could be prevented if men ate a healthy diet, maintained a healthy weight and were more physically active.

Prostate cancer



Possible symptoms

- Reduced or weak urine flow
- Frequent urination
- Pain passing urine
- Blood in urine

However – most prostate cancers in early stages do not produce any symptoms at all – that's why it is vital to follow the recommended check up routine.

Risk factors

- Age – risk increases with age
- Overweight and obesity
- Race – black men have a higher risk
- Family history of prostate cancer

Skin cancer



Possible symptoms

- Changes in size, shape or colour of moles
- Itchy mole
- Inflamed or bleeding mole

Risk factors

- Sun exposure
- Sunbed use

Bowel cancer



Possible symptoms

- Bleeding from back passage
- Abdominal pain
- Change in bowel habits

Risk factors

- Smoking
- High red meat diet
- Low fibre diet
- High alcohol consumption
- Overweight and obesity

Lung cancer



Possible symptoms

- Persistent cough
- Coughing up blood
- Weight loss
- Chest pain

Risk factors

- Smoking
- Exposure to second hand smoke
- Exposure to radon gas and asbestos

Suicide

Suicide rates are four times higher for men than women, this gender imbalance can be attributed to men's decision to use deadlier means when choosing a suicide method and their unwillingness to speak to their doctor.

Depression is one of the most important risk factors in male suicide. Unfortunately, male depression is under-diagnosed because men are less likely to seek help.



Did you know?

For men aged 1 to 44 years, accidents are the number one cause of death.

Symptoms for men at risk of suicide

- Depression
- Becoming socially withdrawn
- Suffered a recent life crisis
- Personality changes
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Frequent thoughts about death

Preventative steps

- Talk to your doctor
- Talk to family and friends
- Exercise, eat well and get plenty of sleep
- Don't ignore stress – it may be hard to avoid, but it can be dealt with
- Know your limits – it is ok to ask for help
- Don't self-medicate – don't turn to alcohol, tobacco or drugs

You can't just 'get over' depression, it is a disease which can be conquered by reaching out for some help.

Prevention

Prevention is key when it comes to men's health. Men must take time to look after themselves and be aware of lifestyle adjustments that have significant positive impacts on overall health, reduce health risk, warn about potential problems and increase longevity.

Small steps can keep men on a healthier path:

Eat a healthier diet



A healthy balanced diet is essential for overall health. A main meal should consist of three-quarters vegetables, beans or grains and one-quarter meat, fish or protein, try to choose water over other beverages.

Reduce salt intake and try to avoid too many sugar rich and processed foods.

Less than 25% of men eat the recommended 5 a day. Most fruit and veg contains necessary nutrients, is low in calories and is high in fibre, ideal for maintaining or attaining a healthy weight. Aim to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and veg per day with these practical tips:

- Add bananas or berries to breakfast cereal
- Cook more meals from scratch
- Blend vegetables and beans to make soups and sauces
- Keep a well-stocked and easily accessible fruit bowl

Learn to relax



Men are more likely to avoid and ignore mental and emotional issues than women. Not dealing with stress from work, family, relationships or finances can cause or worsen physical conditions.

Men must equip themselves with healthy strategies for coping with life's ups and downs.

- Get adequate sleep every night
- Practice mindfulness
- Practice controlled breathing
- Always ask for help when needed
- Talk to your doctor or someone you trust if you find stress overwhelming

Be more physically active



Making time for physical activity is very important for overall health. Maintaining a physically active lifestyle reduces the risk associated with many physical and mental illnesses including, heart disease, diabetes and depression. Aim to be active for at least 30 minutes every day with these practical tips:

- Try cycling, jogging or walking part of the journey to work
- Always take the stairs or walk up the escalator
- Get active at lunchtime – try walking or jogging with a colleague
- Allocate some time every evening for exercise – it's good for body and mind

Drink alcohol in moderation



A glass of wine with dinner or a pint of beer after work can become a normal part of day-to-day life.

As well as contributing to unhealthy weight gain, alcohol has been linked to several chronic diseases, including some cancers.

It's ok to have an occasional drink, but aim to drink in moderation with these practical tips:

- Drink slowly – enjoy your drink and avoid downing it too quickly
- Drink smaller measures
- Finish a drink before topping up – helps keep track of quantity consumed
- Dilute drinks – add tonic water to spirits or lemonade to lager
- Drink a glass of water between alcoholic drinks

Stop smoking



If you smoke, stop today. Cigarette smoking damages almost every organ of the body, causes many diseases, and reduces the health of smokers in general.

On average, smokers will die 10 years earlier than non-smokers. By quitting, smokers lower their risk for smoking-related diseases and can add years to their lives.

Speak with your doctor or local smoking cessation group for advice and help on quitting.

Benefits of stopping smoking

1 week
of quitting

- The carbon monoxide in your body decreases to lower levels and the amount of oxygen in your blood increases to normal levels
- Your ability to smell and taste will improve
- Your breath, hair, and clothes will smell better

1 month
of quitting

- Your blood circulation and heart function will improve
- Your lungs may also begin to clear, allowing you to breathe more easily
- Coughing caused by smoking will begin to decrease
- You'll be able to exercise and perform physical activities without feeling as winded
- Your teeth and fingernails will stop yellowing

1 year
of quitting

- Your risk for heart disease is lowered to half that of a smoker's
- Your heart attack risk drops dramatically

5 years
of quitting

- Your risk of having a stroke is significantly reduced
- Your risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, and bladder is cut in half.
- Cervical cancer risk falls to that of a non-smoker.

10 years
of quitting

- Your risk of dying from lung cancer will drop to half that of a smoker's
- Your risk of getting other types of cancer also decreases

15 years
of quitting

- Your risk for heart disease will be at the same level as that of a non-smoker
- Your risk of developing other conditions, such as arrhythmia, will be reduced to normal levels.



Did you know?

Late presentation to health services leads to many male health problems becoming untreatable.



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Your International Health Insurance Cover

It is important that men attend regular routine check-ups with their doctor, let the doctor know if they are experiencing any changes (no matter how insignificant) and speak with the doctor about preventative tests.

Don't put off visits to the doctor, if you are experiencing health problems or need help making healthy lifestyle changes, call your doctor today.

"Make use of the comprehensive insurance coverage of preventative care that Allianz Worldwide Care offers – it is updated regularly to include all internationally recognized and cutting edge measures to stay healthy and lead a happy and worry free life."

Dr Ulrike Sucher, Medical Director
Allianz Worldwide Care