Focus on Men’s Health

This year Men’s Health Week is observed from June 9-15. Its purpose is to heighten the awareness of preventable health problems and encourage early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the top 3 health risks/threats for men are heart disease, cancer and unintentional injury. Making healthy lifestyle choices, such as eating a healthy diet and exercising; managing risky behaviors, such as drinking too much or smoking and participating in a scheduled health screening can lower the risk of serious health problems.

It’s never too late to start healthy habits. Make a healthy diet and regular physical activity part of your daily routine. Both of these steps can help to reduce weight as well as lower blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar, which in turn can lower the risks of health problems, such as heart disease and diabetes.

You should visit your doctor regularly, even if you are healthy. The purpose of these visits is to establish and maintain a relationship in case of illness, to assist in developing a healthy lifestyle, to screen for disease and to update vaccinations. The only way to find out if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or high blood sugar is to get regular checkups. Many men don’t even know they have a health concern, because in most cases, symptoms don’t appear until the advanced stages.

Many of the major health risks that men face—like colon cancer or heart disease—can be prevented and treated with early diagnosis. Screenings (tests that look for disease) can find these early, when they are easier to treat. Blood pressure checks and tests for high blood sugar and high cholesterol are types of screenings. It’s important that all men get the screening tests they need.

To speak with a health coach, call 1.866.262.4764 or (TTY) 1.877.720.7771, weekdays, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. ET.
You should visit your doctor regularly

Here are some other recommended screenings:

**Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm:** If you are between the ages of 65 and 75 and have ever been a smoker (as little as 5 packs or more in your lifetime), get screened once for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). This is a bulging in your abdominal aorta, your largest artery. An AAA may burst, which can cause dangerous bleeding and death.

This screening is painless and quick and is usually done at a radiology clinic visit. An ultrasound is used to create a picture of your abdominal aorta using sound waves. The width of your abdominal aorta is then measured to determine whether there is a bulge.

**Colon Cancer:** If you are 50-75 years old, get a screening test for colorectal cancer. Several different tests, such as a stool test, sigmoidoscopy or a colonoscopy can detect this cancer. Your doctor can help you decide which is best for you. If you are between the ages of 76 and 85, talk to your health care provider about whether you should continue to be screened.

**Depression:** Your emotional health is as important as your physical health. Men are less likely to show the “typical” signs of depression, such as sadness or hopelessness. Instead, you may feel more irritable or even hostile and aggressive. Talk to your doctor about being screened for depression, especially if these feeling have lasted 2 weeks or longer.

**Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Infection:** This is recommended in persons at high risk for infection. It is also recommended as a one-time screening for adults born between 1945 and 1965.

**Immunizations:** Get a yearly flu shot. Other recommended immunizations include Tdap; tetanus booster (if it has been more than 10 years since your last shot) and varicella (chickenpox), HPV, shingles or herpes zoster vaccination at age 60 or older and MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and pneumococcal (pneumonia) at age 65 or older.

Talk to your doctor about which vaccines are right for you. You can also find which ones you need by going to: [cdc.gov/vaccines/](http://cdc.gov/vaccines/).
It’s never too late to start healthy habits

Blue Health Solutions™
Health Coach

Personalized support and information are available, weekdays, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. ET, by calling 1.866.262.4764.

Lung Cancer: If you are between the ages of 55 and 80, have a 30 pack-year smoking history and smoke now or have quit within the past 15 years, talk to your doctor about getting screened for lung cancer. Your pack-year history is the number of packs of cigarettes smoked per day times the number of years you have smoked. Know that quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health. Screening should be discontinued once a person has not smoked for 15 years or develops a health problem that substantially limits life expectancy or the ability or willingness to have curative lung surgery.

Lung cancer can be detected with low-dose computed tomography (LCT). For LCT, you lie on a table while a large machine passes over you to scan your lungs.

Overweight and Obesity: The best way to learn if you are overweight or obese is to find your body mass index (BMI). BMI is an estimate of body fat and a good measure of risk for diseases that occur with being overweight and obese. You can find your BMI by entering your height and weight into a BMI calculator, such as the one available at: nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/BMI/bmicalc.htm.

A BMI between 18.5 and 25 indicates a normal weight. Persons with a BMI of 30 or higher may be obese. If you are obese, talk to your health care professional about getting intensive counseling and help with changing your behaviors to lose weight.

Whether it’s through a healthy diet and exercise, an annual physical exam or health screenings, make your health a priority, not only during Men’s Health Week but every day! Take action to live a healthier life for you and for those who love you.

Resources:

mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/mens-health/basics/mens-health/hlv-20049438
healthfinder.gov/FindServices/SearchContext.aspx?topic=542
nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/menshealth.html
ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/healthy-men/healthy-men.html
uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/recommendations.htm

This material is not intended as medical advice. Please talk to your doctor about this and any other health information.

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