

Men's Health – The Basics

Health Tips for Men

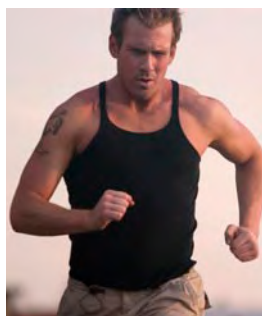
Maintain a Healthy Weight

Most (two-thirds) of all adults are overweight or obese. That increases your risk for just about every major disease including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, arthritis, and stroke. Losing even a few pounds can improve how you feel and reduce health risks. Join a gym, see a doctor, join a reputable weight loss program, or do it on your own. But, do it. Make your first goals achievable:

1. Don't gain any extra weight.
2. If needed, trim 10 to 15 pounds.
3. You can lose more weight later, if you need to.

Get Moving

Two-thirds of all men (68%) don't get enough physical activity to provide even minimal health benefits. 30 minutes a day (on most days) is recommended.



More can be better, but don't overdo it. Find fun things to do. Walk, swim, bike, jog, play basketball, volleyball, or tennis.

Be Smoke Free

You already know that. Smoking is an incredibly strong addiction and the single most preventable cause of death in the United

States today. Using tobacco or even inhaling secondhand smoke dramatically increases your risk of disease (heart disease, cancer) and premature death.

If you are ready to seriously consider quitting, there are several approaches. Talk with your doctor, join a smoking cessation class, try the patch, or find another approach that might work for you. If it doesn't work, try something else.

Eat Healthy



An apple a day actually works – especially when part of a well-balanced diet.

Food Choices	Recommended Intake	Examples
Carbohydrates	45-65 percent of daily calories	Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains should be the basis of your diet.
Fats	20-35 percent of daily calories	Olive, canola, and other unsaturated fats and oils are healthier choices than solid or animal fats.
Protein	10-35 percent of daily calories	Fish, poultry, nuts, and legumes are healthy protein choices. Limit high-fat meats.
Fiber	38 grams a day for men	Fruits, whole grains, vegetables, nuts, and legumes are high in fiber.
Refined foods and sugars	Small amounts	Limit soft drinks, sweets, refined foods, and snack foods.

Get Routine Exams and Screenings

Each year American men make 150 million *fewer* doctor visits than women. The discrepancy occurs in all age, education, and socioeconomic groups. An American Medical Association (AMA) study concluded that men don't go to their doctor for a variety of reasons including fear, denial, embarrassment, and threats to their masculinity. Don't let one of these reasons put your health at risk.

Get yearly flu shots and other vaccinations recommended by your doctor. Vaccinations are often required for travel or to reduce job-related risks.

Make an appointment for a complete physical exam. Then ask your doctor how often you should come back. Conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, certain cancers, diabetes, and STDs may have no symptoms and can only be diagnosed through an examination. Early detection almost always means a better chance of management or cure.

Best Health Numbers

Blood pressure	< 120/80
Fasting blood glucose	< 90
Total cholesterol	< 200
HDL cholesterol	≥ 45

Causes of Disability and Death in Men

Causes	Percent of Deaths
Heart Disease	28.4
Cancer	24.1
Unintentional injuries	5.8
Stroke	5.2
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	5.1
Diabetes	2.9
Influenza and pneumonia	2.4
Suicide	2.1
Kidney disease	1.6
Chronic liver disease	1.5

Good lifestyle choices can affect and reduce the risks of all of these causes.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Manage Stress

Job stress, relationship stress, financial stress, and other factors can seriously affect your mental and physical health. Learn simple stress reducing techniques.

Identify everything you can think of that causes stress. Once identified, devise some solutions for each stress. Try some of these proven strategies.

- **Exercise.** Excess stress causes your body to produce stress chemicals. You feel tense, energetic, and ready to take action. Some call it nervous energy. Over time, a buildup of stress hormones can damage your body. Exercise gets rid of stress hormones and helps you relax.
- **Set reasonable expectations.** Many people set high, unrealistic expectations and then get disappointed when they aren't met. Forgive yourself for not being perfect. Do your best and accept that everyone has limitations – even you.
- **Get enough sleep.** Aim for 7–8 hours daily. Sleep isn't overrated. It allows your body to recharge and heal and give you the energy to get through another day. People who are stressed out often have difficulty falling asleep. If you drink caffeine limit yourself to a cup or two in the morning. At bedtime, drink warm milk, read, or do a crossword puzzle – whatever helps you get sleepy. When your body does get enough sleep, you wake up refreshed.
- **Laugh a little.** Laughter is good medicine. It's a proven stress reducer. Take a step back and look at the situation from a different angle. Surround yourself with fun-loving, cheerful people. You may find that the world is in fact a funny place.
- **Try a relaxation technique.** If you're having trouble relaxing, you may want to look into progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation. A class in relaxation techniques may be exactly what you need.
- **Take breaks.** People need breaks. Working all day long without any breaks is counterproductive and will result in fatigue, exhaustion, and possibly burn-out. Pace yourself and take breaks when you need to. A short break every few hours can do wonders.
- **Go easy on caffeine.** Caffeine can make you feel nervous and jittery, which does not help to reduce stress. If you are taking in a large amount of caffeine each day, slowly reduce your daily intake of coffee, tea, soft drinks, or other products containing caffeine.



Avoid alcohol or drink in moderation

Alcohol can easily destroy your health if it gets out of control. If you drink, limit yourself to no more than 2 drinks, and don't drink every day.

Know Yourself and Your Risks

Are you at risk for some diseases because your parents had them (arthritis, diabetes, heart disease)? Find out. Does your job put you at increased risk for accidents or disease (such as lung diseases)? Take precautions when needed. Risks often increase as you get older.

Protect Yourself

Think safety. Fasten seat belts, apply sunscreen, wear a helmet, install smoke detectors, wash your hands, and more. Plan ahead to reduce the risks of preventable illness and accidents.

Practice Safe Sex

Abstinence or only having sex with a mutually faithful partner is the best way to reduce your risk of STDs. Otherwise, be sure you always use a condom.

Be Good to Yourself

Health is more than the absence of disease. It's a lifestyle choice. It means taking time to play and relax. Balance work and play. You can be healthier longer by choosing moderation in all things. Even tough guys can stop and smell the roses.

Be a Good Dad

Children benefit from time spent with their father. Most kids want a dad to be active in their lives, although it doesn't always happen. It can be because of long work hours, a break in the family, or even indifference. It is sometimes difficult for fathers to verbalize love for their children, but there are many other ways dads can show they care. Men who have no children can always be a good uncle or Big Brother to kids they know.

- **Talk to your kids** about your feelings – and theirs.
- **Spend time with your children** – you are the first and strongest male model in their life.
- **Comfort your kids** when they are hurt, discouraged, or sad. Dads can provide a strong sense of security.
- **Have fun with your kids;** whatever their age there are age-appropriate games and activities.
- **Help them with their homework,** chores, or hobbies.
- **Go to school activities** and take an active part in your children's education.
- **Teach your values to your children** and be sure to set a good example.
- **Teach your kids to solve problems,** even when the problems seem difficult.
- **Don't push your children too hard;** let them be kids and pursue their own interests.
- **Be there when they need you.**



For more information, download "Blueprint for Men's Health," a free booklet available at: www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/Blueprint.pdf.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; American Psychiatric Association; Mayo Clinic; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Harvard School of Public Health.

© 2006 Wellsource, Inc. All rights reserved.