



HEALTH

F O R M E N

Reducing Cancer Risks



Nearly 300,000 men die from cancer every year in America. Even more alarming is the fact that many of these deaths are easily avoidable, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The lifestyle choices that many men make are playing a major role in whether or not they will be faced with battling cancer at some point in their lives.

Included within these potentially dangerous lifestyle choices are smoking, lack of exercise and a stubbornness to receive basic check-ups that could spot cancer before it spreads.

STOP SMOKING

Taking the steps necessary to prevent cancer requires an honest, introspective look at your lifestyle.

The CDC says that more men in the United States die from lung cancer than any other cancer, and that cigarette smoking causes most of these cases.

Smokers also increase their close friends' and family members' lung cancer risk by 20 percent to 30 percent through second-hand smoke, according to the CDC.

LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Another debilitating lifestyle choice is inactivity.

Even for men with the busiest of schedules, finding time for some form of physical activity is crucial in keeping weight down and metabolism up.

Many cancers are associated with obesity, including colorectal, esophageal, kidney and pancreatic, according to the CDC. Excess weight, lack of physical activity and an unhealthy diet are all contributing factors to obesity.

Taking small steps to cancel out these risk factors can go a long way to prevent obesity-related cancers.

CHECK-UPS

The American Cancer Society recommends that men older than 20 receive cancer-related check-ups as part of general health visits.

Check-ups can include health counseling and simple screenings. Physicians may be able to find cancers of the skin, thyroid, mouth, lymph nodes and testicles.

There are special tests designed to find certain cancers, but asking to receive general check-ups can make a big difference in identifying and treating cancer in its early stages.

Dealing with Hair Loss

Male-pattern baldness is usually inherited, along with the feelings of disappointment that some men find go along with it.



Psychology experts say that denial, anger and even depression can be natural phases to the hair-loss process, especially for men in their 20s and 30s.

But as advancements in medical technology continue to break through, there are more tools than ever for men to fight back against hair loss.

THE CAUSES

While hereditary is a leading factor in hair loss, so too are other circumstances out of your control. Post-surgical reactions, hormonal issues, certain medicines and infections can all cause hair loss.

Familydoctor.org also points to hairstyle choices as contributing factors. Men who wear cornrows can suffer from a type of hair loss called traction alopecia, which can cause scarring that can lead to permanent loss.

Regardless of what causes your hair loss, Familydoctor.org recommends that you discuss your situation with your physician, who will ask you questions about your family history, diet, medicines and recent illnesses to get to the bottom of your hair loss.

TREATMENTS

We've all seen the television commercials. Depending on your type of hair loss, there could be a medicine out there for you.

Some are available without a prescription and are applied directly to the scalp, making for an easy potential solution to common baldness. Other medicines come in pill form.

It is important to consult your physician when deciding on a medicine. Your doctor may also recommend treating an illness that is causing your hair loss or correcting a hormone imbalance.

EMOTIONAL ACCEPTANCE

Hair loss is a highly emotional experience for many men. Some studies have even found that depression can set in.

A study published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information found that hair plays a vital role in determining self-image, social perceptions and social functioning.

Nearly half of the men surveyed for the study said that losing hair was linked to concern about losing an important part of their personal attractiveness.

But experts urge men to stay positive in the face of hair loss and focus on the fact that they are simply entering a more mature stage of their lives.

Plan for Losing Weight

Love-handles keeping you down? Embarrassed to take your shirt off at the beach? Being overweight can have negative impacts on your self-confidence, mood and overall health.

In its most recent study, the World Health Organization found that 1.4 billion adults were overweight. Of those, more than 200 million men were defined as obese.

WHAT IS BMI?

Your body mass index is a tool that many physicians and weight-loss specialists use to assess your physical condition.

The indicator is a numerical value of your weight in relation to your height and can help identify unhealthy weights for men of all body-frame sizes.

High BMIs are dangerous because of their effect on blood pressure and cholesterol, according to the American Heart Association. The organization's website has a body mass index calculator that will give you your BMI in a confidential manner.

MAKE A PLAN

So your BMI is not where it should be. What do you do now?

Research is a good place to start. Find a weight-loss consultant or sit down with your physician to discuss your options.

A healthier diet and more exercise will be at the center of all weight-related advice, but work with these experts to create a specific strategy that will work for you.

Online research can also be an effective place to start, as many weight-loss specialists and organiza-



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tions have taken to the internet, mobile apps or digital diaries that can provide you with high-level information, positive words of encouragement and easy ways to track your exercise and dieting plans.

DON'T DO IT ALONE

Losing weight can be a challenging mission to take on by yourself.

Many people find exercise to be boring and monotonous. That's why workout experts often urge you to find

a friend or family member who may want to lose weight, and invite them to join you on your journey for better health.

Having a partner can break up those long jogging sessions while also upping your energy level and desire to finish tough workouts.

De-Stress for Your Health

Money, relationships and work – there are many contributing factors to the stress facing many men. But it is how you deal with these stressors that can play a big role in determining your overall health.

Stress strains our physical, mental or emotional well-being, and if left untreated, can have a damaging impact on our relationships, jobs and home life.

It is sometimes difficult to pinpoint exactly what is causing stress, but identifying key factors is the first step in successfully eliminating them from your life.

TYPES OF STRESS

The American Institute of Stress breaks down the definition of stress into various forms.

Acute stress is defined as fight or flight – an in-the-moment stress that requires the body to defend itself in some way.

Chronic stress is caused by everyday factors such as bills and jobs. The institute works hard to educate medical practitioners, scientists, health care professionals and the public to drive a more collaborative, less stressful society.

SERIOUS DISORDERS

Research shows that elongated stress can contribute to serious emotional and physical disorders, including depression, anxiety, heart attacks and



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stroke, among others.

A recent study by the American Psychological Association found that men are much more likely than women to report that their own stress has slight or no impact on their health.

Men were also found to be

less confident in a psychologist's ability to help improve lifestyle and behavioral changes.

STRESS BUSTERS

Exercise and vigorous physical activity can help you de-stress in a hurry, boosting

feel-good endorphins and distracting you from your worries.

The Mayo Clinic recommends virtually any form of exercise to effectively manage stress, improve your mood and sharpen overall focus.

Another way to beat stress

is to talk about it. Find someone who is willing to listen to you vent, and let them know exactly what is going on in your life. They may have knowledge from their own past experiences that can help you navigate through stressful situations.

Focus on Veterans' Health

Veterans are more likely than nonveterans to report having two or more chronic conditions, work limitations and serious psychological distress.

This is according to the findings from the comprehensive National Health Interview Survey.

The results convey the need for more attention on the overall health and safety of America's military men and women, who endure months and sometimes years away from their families, friends and sense of normalcy.

VETERANS VS. ACTIVE DUTY

According to another study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, veterans were more likely than active duty men to report smoking and heavy alcohol consumption.

The researchers of the study urged the need for more emphasis to be placed on educating military members on poor behaviors and preventing them through linkage to health care services.

And it's not just about Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals, they said. It is important for veterans to know that they have many health care options available, including psychological and emotional, to help them through any issues that may be driving unhealthy life choices.



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MOVING FORWARD

There are numerous tools available to veterans who may be having a hard time re-acclimating to home life after a challenging length of service.

One such instrument is an online program called Moving

Forward, which provides free education and life coaching to help veterans handle challenges.

It provides helpful videos, step-by-step instructions for dealing with specific issues and peer spotlights highlighting veterans who have overcome health obstacles.

SUPPORT A VETERAN

Sometimes friends and family members can make all the difference in keeping a veteran healthy and happy.

Knowing that they have a strong support system around them, especially after long

deployments, can serve as a comfort and confidence to ensure a veteran's seamless transition back into a normal work and life schedule.

If you don't know any veterans, you can easily get involved in local veterans organizations to help someone who may need you.

Prostate Cancer Concerns

Excluding some forms of skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common form found in men, according to the American Cancer Society.

It is a frightening disease because the exact cause of prostate cancer is not known. Some studies have shown that overweight men may have a slightly lower risk of prostate cancer, but they may have a higher risk of prostate cancers that are likely to be fatal.

Others have found that diets high in certain vegetables and fish may result in a lower risk of prostate cancer.

RISK FACTORS

Defining specific risk factors for prostate cancer has been a challenge for medical professionals, as there are no certain causes of the disease.

Physicians and cancer organizations do, however, acknowledge that men have a greater chance of getting prostate cancer if they are 50 years or older or are African American. In addition, men with a father, brother or son who has prostate cancer may possess a bigger risk for the disease.

SYMPTOMS

Many easily recognizable symptoms usually trigger the diagnosis of prostate cancer, although some men afflicted with the disease never suffer from any symptoms at all.

Difficulty in starting urination, weak or interrupted flow



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of urine, difficulty in emptying the bladder completely and continuous pain in the back, hips or pelvis are all potential warning signs, according to the American Cancer Society.

Find out more symptoms from your doctor, and be sure to consult him or her if you suffer from any of the afore-

mentioned indications.

SCREENING

Screening for prostate cancer is a topic of great debate among medical professionals. Many urge men to consult their physicians to discuss the benefits and risks of prostate

cancer screenings.

The obvious benefit is early detection of the cancer that kills more than 25,000 men per year, according to the American Cancer Society.

Organizations like the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, however, recommend

against prostate-specific screenings because of the potential risk of false positive test results and mild to serious side effects from treatment.

The choice to get screening or not is something you should weigh carefully with the advice of your physician.

Men and Doctors: By the Numbers

Whether it be worry or machismo, many men choose to avoid the doctor year after year. A multitude of reasons is usually behind the trend, which is troublesome to many physicians across the United States.



Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of more than 1,100 men for the American Academy of Family Physicians to dig a little deeper into the minds of men. Here's what they found:

Eighty-five percent of men said they seek medical treatment when they're sick, while almost all of the men – 92 percent – waited at least a few days to see if they felt better before seeking care. Other findings included:

- **I only go to the doctor if I am extremely sick:** 36 percent

- **I am healthy, I have no reason to go to a doctor:** 23 percent

- **I prefer to treat myself naturally:** 12 percent

- **I don't have time to go to the doctor:** 12 percent

- **I don't have health insurance:** 11 percent

- **I don't like doctors:** 8 percent

- **I am afraid of finding out that something is wrong with me:** 7 percent

- **I don't know of a good doctor in my area:** 4 percent

- **Nothing prevents me from going to the doctor:** 39 percent