

MALE-SPECIFIC HEALTH PROBLEMS

■ Testicular Cancer

Cancer of the testicle is the most common cancer in men ages 15 to 35. Although it cannot be prevented, thanks to improved treatments and diagnostics, testicular cancer, like prostate cancer, has a very high cure rate if caught early.

■ Low Testosterone

Testosterone is the most important male hormone. Almost five million men suffer from testosterone deficiency, which, if left untreated for too long, is linked with long-term health problems such as loss of muscle mass, low sex drive, erectile dysfunction, inability to concentrate, and even osteoporosis.

■ Prostate Problems

Located in front of the rectum, this walnut-sized gland produces semen and naturally enlarges as men age. Potential problems include prostatitis and BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia) which can cause swelling and painful or difficult urination.

■ Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is a concern for men 50 and older, or high-risk men 40 and older (these include African-Americans, men with a family history of prostate cancer, and men exposed to Agent Orange), all of whom should be screened yearly. Caught early, this disease is often treatable.

■ Erectile Dysfunction/Impotence

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is the inability of a man to get or maintain an erection sufficient for his sexual needs or the needs of his partner. Although ED becomes more common with age, men of any age can suffer from it – and most briefly do at some point in their life. Most of the time, erectile problems are caused by an underlying health problem, such as diabetes, clogged arteries, or high blood pressure.

Unfortunately, most men refuse to discuss ED with either their partners or health care providers. As a result, men feel embarrassed, and women feel that their men no longer find them attractive. So if you want to make love and he says he has a headache, pay attention: it might be something far more serious.

RECOGNIZING OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS

Male-only conditions aren't the only ones men suffer from. They die at higher rates than women from stroke, heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes, and cancer. When a warning light flashes on the car dashboard, most men usually take the car to the shop. But when warning lights flash on their body, most men do not (or will not) notice. Here are a few flashing lights you should look out for:

■ **Changes in bowel or bladder habits.** This can be an indication of prostate or bladder problems. And blood in the urine is a common indicator of kidney problems. Does he get up repeatedly at night to go to the bathroom? Chances are he will not notice, but you will.

■ **Persistent backaches,** changes in the color of urine or stool, obvious changes in warts or moles, unusual lumps, recurrent chest pains or headaches, bleeding that will not stop, nagging cough, unexplained weight loss, and extreme fatigue can all be symptoms of other serious health problems.

■ **Depression.** Although women may be more likely to attempt suicide, men are four times more likely to succeed. Because men are reluctant to ask for help and may try to hide their depression, you may recognize the symptoms sooner than he does. These can include acting overly anxious, having trouble sleeping, complaining of feeling sad or “empty” or helpless, engaging in unusually risky or reckless behavior, or losing interest in hobbies or other pleasurable activities (including sex).

■ **Osteoporosis.** Although usually considered a women's disease, osteoporosis affects men too, and is generally under-diagnosed in men. This disease, which causes the bones to become fragile and more likely to break, can lead to permanent disability or death.

■ **Breast Cancer.** Men have breast tissue too, and 400 men die of breast cancer each year. Men often confuse their symptoms with a sports or work injury, and because they are less likely to recognize or report symptoms, they are usually diagnosed only after the disease has spread.

ENSURING GOOD HEALTH FOR LIFE

Besides encouraging the men in your life to exercise, eat a high-fiber/low-fat diet, quit smoking, and do monthly self-exams, the most important step you can take is to get them into the habit of getting regular medical checkups. Here are several health maintenance milestones recommended by leading health organizations:*

In their 20s:

- A complete physical every three years
- Check blood pressure every year
- Screening for cancers of the thyroid, testicles, lymph nodes, mouth, and skin every three years
- Cholesterol test for total, LDL, and HDL (the good kind) every three years
- Testicular self-exam every month

In their 30s, all of the above, plus:

- A complete physical every two years

In their 40s, all of the above, plus:

- A complete physical every two years
- A baseline prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test and digital rectal exam (DRE) at age 40 for all men.
- A prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test and digital rectal exam (DRE) every year if in a high-risk group. Other men should consult with their health care provider about an annual exam.
- Cancer tests every year
- A stool test (for colon and rectal cancers) every year

Starting at age 50, all of the above, plus:

- A sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy (for colon cancers) every three to four years or as recommended by your health care provider
- A prostate-specific antigen (PSA) and digital rectal exam (DRE) test every year

* Sources: American Cancer Society; American Heart Association, Men's Health Network



Armin Brott

Armin Brott, the author of eight classics on fatherhood including *The Expectant Father* and *The Military Father*, also writes extensively on men's health issues, edits the *Talking About Men's Health* blog, and is the lead author of the *Blueprint for Men's Health* series. Visit Armin's website at: www.mrdad.com

Please Note: Men's Health Network does not provide medical services. Rather, this information is provided to encourage you to begin a knowledgeable dialogue with your physician. Check with your health care provider about your need for specific health screenings.

MN Men's Health Network™

BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES ONE MAN AT A TIME™

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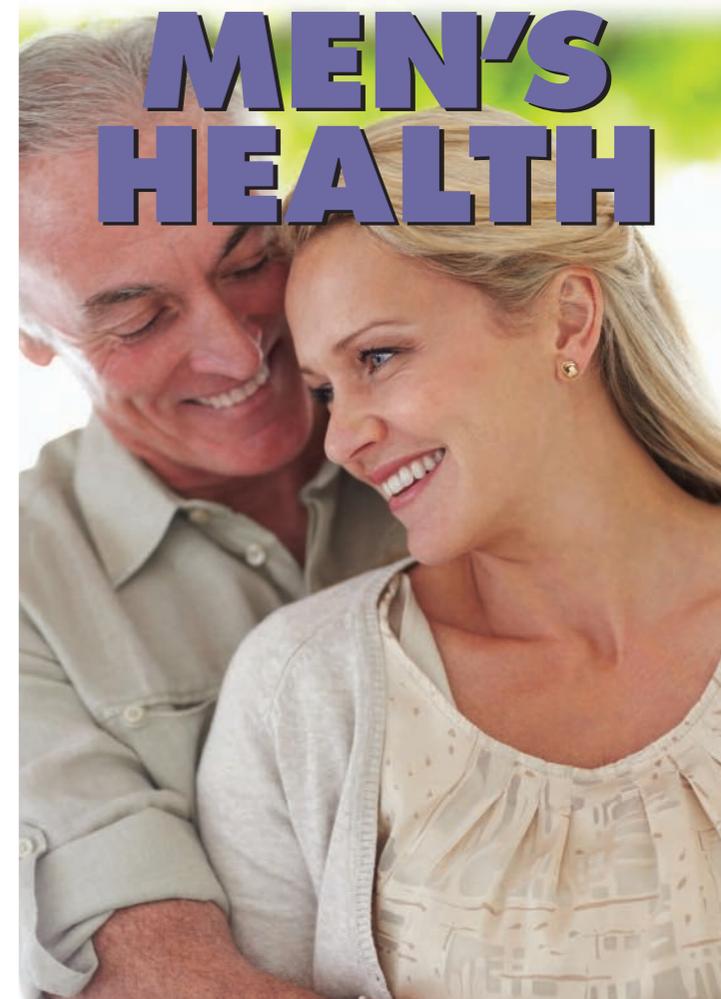
INFORMATION FOR WOMEN
CONCERNING THE MEN THEY LOVE

WHAT Women

NEED TO KNOW

ABOUT

MEN'S HEALTH



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DID YOU KNOW?

On average, men are less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy than women. Part of the reason is that they do not take care of themselves as well as women do. They are also less likely to have health insurance, more likely to work in dangerous occupations, and often do not seek medical attention when they need it.

Men's health issues don't affect only men – they have a significant impact on their family and friends, too. The conditions we'll be talking about in this brochure can influence everything from sexual and marital relations to quality and length of life.

Unfortunately, most of these issues – especially the ones having to do with sex or masculinity – are very hard for men to talk about ...

... THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN.

By encouraging the guys in your life to take even the smallest symptoms seriously and discuss them with their doctors, you will be helping them take a more active role in their own health care. And by educating yourself about potential male health problems and passing that information on to the men you love, you may also be able to save a life.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Know When To Call in The Professionals

If you identify a symptom, get your man to the doctor immediately – and do not take no for an answer. But even if he is the picture of health, one of the most important steps you can take is to get him (and your boys) into the habit of getting regular checkups. As with most things, the results of specific exams are important, but not nearly as important as changes over time. In the days and weeks before the visit, help him prepare. Spend some time going over his

family history (many diseases have family ties), keep track of any symptoms you are worried about, and write down a list of questions he should ask the doctor.

Check Him Out

Somewhere along the line we got the idea that “self-exams” have to be done by ourselves. Nothing could be further from the truth. There's no reason why your guy can't help you with your breast exams or you with his testicular exams. And don't forget about his back. Women get most of their skin cancers in places where they can see them – on their hands and face and below the dress line, but men get most of theirs on their backs, where they are a lot harder to see.

Prevention, Prevention, Prevention

The three most effective things you can do for your man (and yourself, for that matter), are to put him on a low-fat, high fiber diet, help him get regular exercise, and get him to quit smoking. These simple steps can drastically reduce the chances that he will succumb to four of the 10 leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.



Encourage the men in your life to get regular checkups and age-appropriate screenings. Regular checkups improve health and extend life!

We realize that many of the issues that we've covered here are sometimes hard to talk about. But it's essential that you talk about them with the men in your life. Take seriously even the smallest symptom of any of the conditions we've outlined in this brochure, since they could indicate a more serious – or even life-threatening – condition.

If you don't have a family physician or can't afford one, look for health fairs and free screening events in your area. Ask your employer, fraternal organization, or place of worship to establish a yearly health fair or screening event. The Men's Health Network can provide advice and guidance for these and other events.

Call the Men's Healthline 888-MEN-2-MEN or visit the Men's Health Network Website at www.menshealthnetwork.org.