

Men's Health

Many Australian men do not look after their own health very well. They tend to avoid or delay regular health checks and their health is often poorer than that of women the same age. Men can often improve their health with changes to diet, exercise and other lifestyle habits.

Health issues

Health issues for men include:

Bowel cancer – more common in men than women. Risk increases over the age of 50 years

Depression – about 1 in 6 Australian men suffer from depression and men are more likely to suicide than women. Men often do not recognise the symptoms of depression and so do not seek help

Erectile dysfunction (ED) – ED, or impotence, is the inability to get and/or keep an erection that allows satisfactory sexual intercourse. ED is a common condition, but most men are reluctant to discuss it with their doctor. Some medical conditions can lead to ED (e.g., diabetes, obesity, heart disease,



high cholesterol, Parkinson's disease). Drinking too much alcohol, smoking, stress and some medicines can also cause ED

Heart disease – men are more likely to die from heart disease than women. Major risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking and overweight, which are more common in men

Low testosterone – testosterone is a male sex hormone. A low testosterone level can be caused by disorders of the testes or pituitary gland or other health problems (e.g., obesity). Testosterone levels also fall as men age. Symptoms of low testosterone include fatigue, irritability and reduced sex drive

Male pattern hair loss (baldness) – causes some men great distress.

Prostate disease – more common in older men. The three main prostate problems are:

- Benign prostatic hyperplasia or hypertrophy (BPH) – the prostate gland gets bigger and can interfere with urine flow
- Prostate cancer – early stage prostate cancer does not usually produce any urinary symptoms
- Prostatitis – prostate becomes sore and swollen, usually due to infection.

Testicular cancer – more common in younger men, but can occur at any age. May cause a hard lump, swelling or pain in a testicle.

Lifestyle issues

Lifestyle issues for men include:

Alcohol – more men than women drink harmful amounts of alcohol, which increases the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, sexual problems, depression, accidents and violence

Being overweight – more men than women are overweight, increasing their risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, osteoarthritis and some cancers

Cigarette smoking – more men than women smoke and more men than women die from smoking-related illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and airways disease

Physical activity – many men do not get enough exercise. Regular exercise helps to lower cholesterol and blood pressure and control weight. It also helps the body to cope with stress, improves sleep and promotes psychological wellbeing.

Self care

A number of health issues are more common in men than women. This may be due to the way men deal with health and lifestyle issues. Of course some health issues only affect men.

Have health checks and tests – ask a doctor

Bowel cancer

- Faecal occult blood test (FOBT) – a test for blood in faeces. A regular FOBT check is recommended for all people over 50 years.
- Sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy – if necessary, a doctor can use a special instrument to look at the inside of the bowel.

High blood pressure

- A regular blood pressure check is recommended for adults (e.g., every two years for men with no risk factors).

High cholesterol

- A regular blood cholesterol test is recommended for adults (e.g., every five years for men over 45 years with no risk factors).

Prostate disease

Regular prostate checks are recommended for men over 50 years, especially if a family member has had prostate cancer.

- Digital rectal examination (DRE) – a doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum, to feel if the prostate is enlarged or abnormal.
- Prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test – can help detect a prostate problem.

Testosterone deficiency

- A blood test can check hormone levels.

Testicular cancer

- Regular self examination (e.g., monthly) for hard lumps, swelling or changes in either testicle is recommended for all men and particularly men with infertility or undescended testes at birth.

Have a healthy lifestyle

- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol to no more than 2 standard drinks in one day.

Important

Consult a doctor for a full health check, if you:

- Are over 40 years of age
 - Are overweight
 - Notice changes in bowel habit or urine flow
 - Notice a lump or change in either testicle
 - Are experiencing ED
 - Feel stressed
 - Plan to start exercising.
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- Exercise at a moderate level for at least 30 minutes on all or most days of the week.
 - Eat regular, healthy meals, including plenty of fruits, vegetables and grain foods. Limit foods high in fat, sugar or salt.
 - Keep to a healthy weight.
 - Drink enough water every day to satisfy your thirst and to keep your urine 'light-coloured' (unless a doctor advises not to).
 - Learn and use relaxation techniques to manage stress.
 - Talk about problems with someone you trust – a friend, relative or health professional.

For more information

Andrology Australia

Phone: 1300 303 878

Website: www.andrologyaustralia.org – for information on erectile dysfunction, androgen deficiency, prostate problems and testicular cancer.

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Impotence Australia

Phone: 1800 800 614

Website www.impotenceaustralia.com.au for information on erectile dysfunction.

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: www.nps.org.au

The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

***Pharmacists are medicines experts.
Ask a pharmacist for advice when
choosing a medicine.***

Related fact cards

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Your Self Care Pharmacy: