

Men's Health and Wellbeing

Factsheet



Men's Health and Wellbeing



Introduction

From problems with the prostate gland or sex, to mental health and general fitness, there are many health issues that men face.

But many men can be reluctant to seek help, or even acknowledge when there's a problem.

Discover some of the main health issues that affect men and what it may mean for you.



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Male menopause – myth or reality?

Often called the andropause, the male menopause is a term sometimes used in the media that can be misleading. It suggests the symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to what occurs in the female menopause. But this isn't true.

Although testosterone levels do fall as men age, the decline is steady, at less than 2% a year from around the age of 30 to 40, and this is unlikely to cause any problems.

Main symptoms associated with the 'male menopause'

- Erectile dysfunction
- Loss of libido
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Lack of energy
- Loss of muscle mass
- Increased body fat
- Hot flashes

Some symptoms such as erectile dysfunction, loss of libido and mood swings may be the result of stress or anxiety.

A 'midlife crisis' can also be responsible. This can happen when men think they've reached life's halfway stage and have anxiety over what they've accomplished.

Other possible causes include lack of sleep, a poor diet, not enough exercise, drinking too much alcohol, smoking and low self-esteem.

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms and are worried, contact your doctor. They'll help to find the underlying cause and advise what can be done to resolve the problem(s).



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Mental health in men

Over a third of men report feeling as though they've experienced a mental health problem like depression or anxiety, at some point in their life.

There are many things that can lead to mental health problems, from something that happened in your past to your current life circumstances. Being stressed either at work or in your personal or home life can be a trigger or can make other existing triggers worse.

Whether it's due to a desire to appear strong, the pressure to 'man up,' or simply not being able to find the words to describe how they feel, many men are still choosing to remain silent and not seek help.

And unfortunately, men are more likely to turn to harmful behaviour such as drinking or drug-taking in order to cope.

They are also far more likely to commit suicide.

Tips to strengthen your mental wellbeing and resilience

- 1** If you're struggling, find at least one person you trust that you can open up to.
- 2** If you see a friend, colleague or somebody else you know having a hard time, try to offer them support
- 3** Next time you feel physically or mentally ill, don't hesitate to call your doctor and get the help you need
- 4** Acknowledge your problems and get advice from family and friends. Avoid using alcohol and drugs to cope
- 5** Feeling angry is natural and a healthy emotion, when you're in control of it. If it causes you to be destructive and has a negative impact on your wellbeing, speak to your doctor about available treatments
- 6** Get sweaty. Find something you like doing that gets your heart rate up. Exercise is a natural mood booster, increases self-esteem and lowers stress
- 7** Sleep well. Aim for 7-9 hours' sleep a night to feel more confident, less stressed and more able to cope with everyday tasks
- 8** Choose your food wisely. What you fuel your brain with will affect its function and consequently your mood and mental health
- 9** Do something you enjoy. It's important to regularly take time out to relax and unwind to help you feel your best.

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Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Chronic = it's a long-term condition and doesn't go away

Obstructive = your airways are narrowed, so it's harder to breathe out quickly and air gets trapped in your chest

Pulmonary = it affects your lungs

Disease = it's a medical condition

This serious disease is a group of lung conditions that make it difficult to empty air out of the lungs because the airways have become narrowed.

COPD is a common condition that mainly affects middle-aged or older adults who smoke. Many people don't realise they have it. Breathing problems tend to get gradually worse over time and can limit your normal activities, although treatment can help keep the condition under control.

More than 16.4 million people have been diagnosed with COPD. It causes long-term disability and early death. And currently there's no cure.

Main symptoms

- Increasing breathlessness, particularly when you're active
- A persistent chesty cough with phlegm – some people may dismiss this as just a "smoker's cough"
- Frequent chest infections
- Persistent wheezing

Without treatment, the symptoms usually get progressively worse. There may also be periods when they get suddenly worse, known as a flare-up or exacerbation.

Get help

See your doctor if you have persistent symptoms of COPD, particularly if you're over 35 and smoke or used to smoke.

Don't ignore the symptoms. If they're caused by COPD, it's best to start treatment as soon as possible, before your lungs become significantly damaged.

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Testicular cancer

Each year in the UK, around 2,300 men are diagnosed with testicular cancer. It's more common in white men and younger to middle-aged men. Testicular cancer can affect anyone with testicles. This includes men, trans (transgender) women and anyone assigned male at birth.

Testicular cancer is a general term for all types of testicular cancer. Most of these cancers develop from germ cells in the testicles. So, they're also sometimes called germ cell tumours.

Main symptoms

- A lump or swelling in a testicle
- A dull ache, pain, or heaviness in the scrotum
- Increased size
- If the cancer has spread to lymph nodes or other parts of the body, it may cause other symptoms

It's important to check your testicles regularly from puberty onwards. Testicular cancer is usually curable, and it's easier to treat when diagnosed early.

More than 98% of men who get testicular cancer will be cured.

For most men, both testicles are about the same size, but it's common for one to be slightly bigger than the other. It's also common for one to hang lower than the other.

They should feel smooth, without any lumps or bumps, and firm but not hard. You may feel a soft tube at the back of each testicle, which is called the epididymis.

Check your balls



Get to know how your balls look and feel normally



Once a month, take a few minutes to check for any changes, the best time is after a bath or shower



Rest your balls in the palm of your hand, and gently roll each one between finger and thumb

If you notice any changes or anything unusual, you should see your doctor. This will give you the best chance of early diagnosis in the rare event of testicular cancer.

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Cardiovascular disease (CVD)

This is a general term for conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels. It's the leading cause of male death in the UK, with 119,000 men having a heart attack each year, compared to 69,000 women. Risk factors for CVD include inactivity, smoking, being overweight, having high cholesterol or blood pressure and having diabetes.

CVD can often largely be prevented by leading a healthy lifestyle.

The four main types of CVD

- Coronary heart disease – the blood vessels supplying the heart are narrowed or blocked
- Stroke – the blood supply to part of your brain is cut off. It needs to be treated in hospital as soon as possible
- Peripheral arterial disease – a build-up of fatty deposits in the arteries restricts blood supply to leg muscles
- Aortic disease – the valve between the main pumping chamber of your heart (left ventricle) and the main artery to your body (aorta) doesn't work properly

Tips to lower your risk

- If you smoke, try to stop as soon as possible. There are many support groups available. Use the NHS Smokefree website to get started
- Have a balanced diet. Low levels of saturated fat, sugar and salt. And plenty of fibre, wholegrain foods, fruit and vegetables
- Exercise regularly. It's recommended that adults do at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, such as cycling or brisk walking
- Maintain a healthy weight. If you're overweight, a combination of regular exercise and a healthy diet can help you lose weight. Aim to get your BMI below 25
- If you drink alcohol, try not to exceed the recommended limit of 14 units a week for men and women



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Body image

It's not an issue that only affects women, it's clear from Mental Health Foundation data that body image affects millions of men as well. Almost 3 in 10 UK adult men aged 18 and above have felt anxious because of body image issues.

The focus of men's anxieties can vary, from hair loss, height and the size of their genitals, to skin problems like acne scarring.

Eating disorders and problems with excessive exercise have increased among men, along with muscle dysmorphia (a psychological condition where a person believes that their body and muscles are too small), anxiety and depression.

The stigma around male body image issues often stops men from speaking honestly about their experiences and seeking treatment.

Tips to establish a healthier attitude surrounding body image

- 1** Set a realistic ideal. You can't change your DNA, so embrace your natural, healthy shape and work towards its full potential
- 2** Avoid negative social comparison. Limit social media use and uninstall apps that make you feel unhappy in relation to your body image
- 3** If you see an advert in the media that you think presents an unhealthy body image as aspirational, you can complain to the **Advertising Standards Authority**
- 4** Model positive behaviour around body image at home. Praise children for qualities unrelated to physical appearance and avoid criticising how you or other people look
- 5** Find greater peace within you when you respect yourself and focus on what your body can do rather than what it looks like
- 6** If you have struggles with male body image issues, be honest and find safe places to talk about what you're going through
- 7** Think posture. Feel more assertive and confident when you hold yourself up straight
- 8** Eat well and make smart nutritional choices. Eat whole fresh foods and don't skip meals.
- 9** Get sweaty and lift your mood by regularly exercising. Release natural endorphins to encourage you to feel happier in your own skin

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Interpersonal violence against men

Often referred to as intimate partner violence, domestic violence or battering, interpersonal violence is a pattern of behaviour used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence.

Anyone can be a victim of interpersonal violence, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexuality or background. And it's a general perception that it's something only endured by women, but interpersonal violence against men is more common than is often realised. Every year, one in three victims of interpersonal abuse are male.

Interpersonal violence can include physical violence, as well as emotional and psychological bullying, sexual violence or financial control.

A man who's being abused may experience some or all of these behaviours:

- Bullying – mocking, humiliation, insults and criticism
- Control – Being checked up on, followed, or stalked
- Threats – intimidation, attacks or violence
- Destruction of their possessions
- Isolation – being stopped from seeing family and friends
- Being forced into sex
- Having money taken or controlled
- Lying, blame and denial of the abuse

You're not to blame

If you're a victim of interpersonal violence, it's unlikely the abusive person will change their behaviour towards you. Domestic violence or domestic abuse is always about asserting power and control.

It's ok to ask for help

Men who are being abused may feel ashamed or afraid of judgment by others, but it doesn't make a man 'weak' or less 'manly' if they experience abuse.

Open up to someone you trust, or if you'd rather be anonymous you can seek professional help from many online support organisations.

Try **Respect** or **ManKind** to get started.

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Vitamins and minerals for men

Most people get all the vitamins and minerals they need from a healthy balanced and varied diet. Good nutrition can help you look, feel and perform your best. But it can sometimes be worth taking a supplement to support your health if you know you have a deficiency.

Supplements recommended for men

Vitamin D - may boost testosterone levels. Because low testosterone makes men prone to a variety of health issues, such as sleep apnea, low metabolism, libido and fatigue, maintaining proper vitamin D levels is a critical part of men's health.

Magnesium - important for blood glucose control, protein synthesis and nerve function. Foods like spinach, almonds, black beans and bananas are high in magnesium. Supplements can support muscular health and sexual health.

Boron - men who consume a diet low in fruits and vegetables could have low levels of boron. Foods with boron include raisins, almonds, prunes and chickpeas.

Omega-3s - renowned for their anti-inflammatory effects, omega-3s can support cardiovascular, joint, and brain health. Found in fish, flaxseeds and walnuts.

Saw palmetto extract - traditionally used for prostate health for many years yet more research is needed.

Many people choose to take supplements but taking too much or taking them for too long could be harmful. The Department of Health and Social Care recommends certain supplements for some groups of people who are at risk of deficiency. Always speak to your doctor before taking a new supplement.

Help and support

[Campaign against living miserably \(CALM\)](#)

[Men's Minds Matter](#)

[Samaritans](#)

[SANE](#)

[Stop smoking support services](#)

[Sexual Advice Association](#)

[British Heart Foundation](#)

[ManKind Initiative](#)

[National Centre for Domestic Violence](#)



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Health focus - the prostate

Only men have a prostate

Only men have a prostate gland and it's about the shape and size of a walnut and sits underneath your bladder - it produces the fluid that makes up part of your semen.

Enlarged prostate

Enlarged prostate - once a man reaches 50 the prostate can become so enlarged that it obstructs urine out of the bladder - this is called Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia which can have similar symptoms to prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men in the UK.

One in seven

One in seven men born today will be diagnosed with prostate cancer - it's more common in men over 65 and in black men.

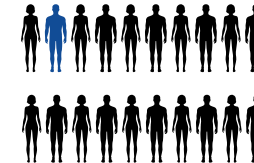
Symptoms

Prostate cancer initially might not produce any symptoms but as it progresses it may cause the following:

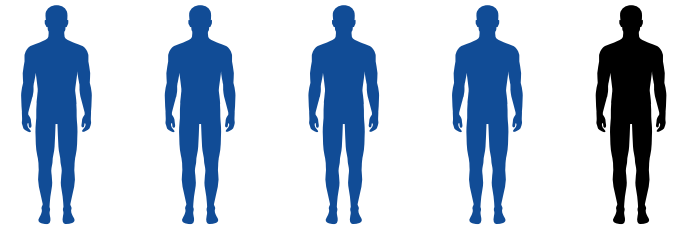
- Unable to urinate (this is called retention)
- Needing to urinate urgently
- Needing to urinate more often than usual
- Getting up to urinate during the night
- Blood in your urine
- Pain when you urinate
- A weak flow of urine
- Trouble starting or stopping



Only **two in five people (40%)** know that being aged **50 or over** increases a man's risk of prostate cancer.



Only **one in twenty people (5%)** know that being black increases a man's risk of prostate cancer.



Four in five men (83%) at increased risk of prostate cancer don't know they're at greater risk.



Only **half of the UK population (47%)** know that having a family history of prostate cancer increases your risk of getting the disease.

*Figures from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,864 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 13 January and 4 February 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+), 2014.

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Breast cancer in men

Breast cancer usually happens in men over 60, but can affect younger men too.

The exact cause of breast cancer in men is not known, but there are some things that increase your risk of getting it.

These include:

- genes and family history – can increase your risk of breast cancer
- conditions that can increase the level of oestrogen in the body – including obesity, Klinefelter syndrome and scarring of the liver (cirrhosis)
- previous radiotherapy to the chest area

Eating a balanced diet, losing weight if you're overweight and not drinking too much alcohol may help reduce the risk.

Symptoms of breast cancer in men:

- A lump in the breast, this is usually hard, painless and does not move around within the breast
- Small bumps in the armpit
- The nipple and surrounding skin becoming hard, red and swollen.
- A sore or rash around the nipple that does not go away
- The nipple turning inwards
- Nipple discharge which may contain blood.

When to see your GP:

- A lump in your breast
- Any other worrying symptoms, such as nipple discharge
- A history of breast cancer (in men or women) in members of your family

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